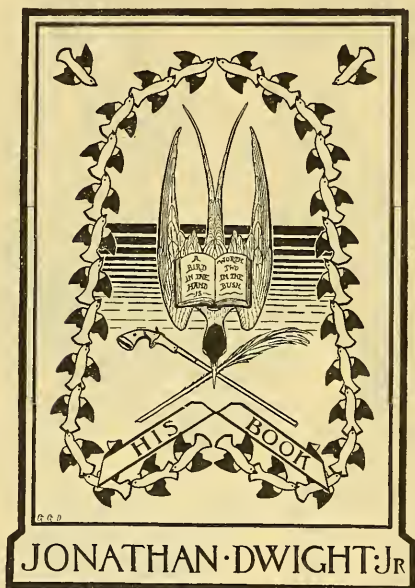


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THE  
AVICULTURAL  
MAGAZINE

VOL. V









THE

# Avicultural Magazine

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BEING THE JOURNAL OF  
THE AVICULTURAL SOCIETY  
FOR THE STUDY OF  
FOREIGN AND BRITISH BIRDS

EDITED BY  
H. R. FILLMER,  
UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
OF THE COUNCIL.

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## EXPLANATION OF FOOTNOTES.

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Most of the footnotes in this volume signed with initials were written by Members of the Executive Committee :

A. G. B.=ARTHUR G. BUTLER.

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R. P.=REGINALD PHILLIPS.

D. S.-S.=DAVID SETH-SMITH.

Mr. PHILLIPPS resigned early in the year, and Mr. MEADE-WALDO was elected in his stead.

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## ERRATUM.

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Page 126, line 5, *for* Nearling *read* Nehrling.

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THE

# Avicultural Society

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FOR THE STUDY OF  
FOREIGN AND BRITISH BIRDS.

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- LEADBETTER, Mr. RICHARD, 21, Trinity Road, Penge. (Dec., 1894).
- LEGH DE LEGH, Dr. H., Redcar, Yorks. (March, 1896).
- LENNIE, Mr. JOSEPH C., Rose Park, Trinity Road, Edinburgh. (Orig. Mem.) \*
- LILFORD, The Lady, Lilford Hall, Oundle, Northamptonshire. (Jan., 1898).
- LLEWELYN, Miss, 188, Earl's Court Road, London, S.W. (Orig. Mem.) \*
- LONG, Mrs. HUME, Dolforgan, Exmouth. (June, 1895).
- LONG, Miss MURIEL M. L., Woodhouse, Chudleigh, S. Devon. (Feb., 1898).
- LOTT, Mr. W. A., 8, Lausdowne Road, Stockwell. (Oct., 1895).
- LOW, Mrs., Kilshane, Tipperary, Ireland. (Feb. 1895).
- LYDON, Mr. A. F., 11, Woodstock Road, Bedford Park, Chiswick. (June, 1895).
- LYNCH, Mr. CYRIL, 45, Rua Dr. Corrêa, Cattete, Rio de Janiero, Brazil. (April, 1897).
- LYON, Lieut-Col. F. L. H., R.A., J.P., Harwood, Horsham. (Nov., 1894).
- MACGAVIN, Dr. JOHN, Trafalgar House, Trafalgar Road, Greenwich. (June, 1898).
- MARSH, Mrs., 49, Sackville Road, Hove. (Dec., 1894).
- MARSHALL, Mr. THOMAS, The Grange, 128, High Street, Poplar, E. (Dec., 1894).
- MARTIN, Mr. H. C., 16, Victoria Road, Old Charlton, S.E. (Jan., 1897).
- MAXWELL, Mr. C. T., South Lawn, 24, Acre Lane, Brixton, S.W. (Mar., 1896).
- MCCORQUODALE, Mrs., Gadlys, Llansadwrn, Isle of Anglesey. (May, 1898).
- MEADE-WALDO, Mr. E. G. B., Stonewall Park, Edenbridge, Kent. (Jan., 1895).
- MICHELL, Mrs., Crakehall, Bedale, Yorkshire. (Sept., 1898).
- MOERSCHELL, Mr. F., Imperial Hotel, Malvern. (June, 1895).
- MORSHEAD, Lady, Forest Lodge, Binfield, Bracknell, Berks. (Dec., 1894). \*
- MORTIMER, Mrs., Wigmore, Holmwood, Surrey. (Orig. Mem.) \*
- MURGATROYD, Mr. J. W., Ash Brook, Heaton, Bradford. (May, 1896).
- NICHOLSON, Mr. ALFRED E., 52, Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh. (Oct., 1896) \*
- NICHOLSON, Mr. W., 67, High West Street, Gateshead. (Feb., 1898).
- OAKEY, Mr. W., 46, High Street, Leicester. (March, 1896). \*
- OATES, Mr. F. W., White House Farm, New Leeds, Leeds. (Oct., 1897).
- O'BRIEN, The Hon. Mrs., Moor Park, Ludlow. (Nov., 1897).
- OLIVER, Dr. G. H., Station Road, Clayton, Bradford. (Feb., 1897).
- O'REILLY, Mr. NICHOLAS S., 9, Royal Crescent, Ramsgate, Kent. (Dec., 1894).
- OSBALDESTON, Mr. W., 2, St. John Street, Preston, Lancashire. (June, 1895). \*
- OWEN, Mr. J. A., 41, King's Road, Brighton. (April, 1895).
- PAGE, Mr. WESLEY T., 6, Rylett Crescent, Shepherd's Bush, London, W. (May, 1897).

- PEARSON, Mr. A. A., 95, Victoria Road, Headingley, Leeds. (Nov., 1897).  
 PERKINS, Mr. SEPTIMUS, Woodford House, Queen's Park Road, Brighton.  
 (Orig. Mem.)
- PERRING, Mr. C. S. R., 144A, Queen Victoria Street, London, E. C.  
 (Sept., 1895).
- PHILLIPPS, Mr. R., 26, Cromwell Grove, West Kensington Park,  
 London, W. (Orig. Mem.) \*
- PHILLIPPS, Mrs. R., 26, Cromwell, Grove, West Kensington Park,  
 London, W. (Orig. Mem.)
- PHILLIPPS, Mr. ALEXANDER T. L., Port Said, Egypt. (Dec., 1894).
- PHILLPOTS, Miss CONSTANCE, Elmhurst, Canterbury. (Feb., 1897).
- PITT, Dr. G. NEWTON, 15, Portland Place, W. (Dec., 1894).
- PITT, Mrs., The Nest, Torquay. (Dec., 1894).
- PLOMLEY, Dr. J. F., Knightrider House, Maidstone. (Feb., 1898).
- POOL, Mr. J. C., Carr's Lane, Birmingham. (Orig. Mem.)
- POYSER, Mr. EDWIN J., F.Z.S., Dunburgh House, Geldeston, Beccles.  
 (Aug., 1897).
- RAILTON, Mr. R. J., Brampton House, Longley Road, Tooting. (April 1897).
- REAY, Mr. JOHN HENRY ALFRED, 7, Rosemont, Wallington, Surrey.  
 (April, 1898).
- REID, Mrs., Funchal, Madeira. (Feb., 1895).
- REID, Mr. WILLIAM, 26, Fountainhall Road, Edinburgh. (Dec., 1894).
- RENANT, Mr. W. E., The Brambles, Elmbourne Road, Tooting Common,  
 S.W. (April, 1897).
- RETTICH, Mr. A., 10, Northanger Road, Streatham Common, S.W.  
 (July, 1895).
- RICHARD, Mr. E., Hotel Metropole, Brighton. (Orig. Mem.) \*
- ROBERTS, Mr. NORMAN B., Ashdell Cottage, Sheffield. (Feb., 1898).
- ROBINSON, Miss H. M., The Newlands, Leamington Spa. (Orig. Mem.)
- ROGERS, Miss G. COXWELL, Park Gate, Cheltenham. (Dec., 1895).
- ROTCH, Mr. CLAUDE D., 3, Beach Lawn, Waterloo, near Liverpool.  
 (June, 1897).
- ROTHERA, Mr. C. L., B. A., Hazlewood, Forest Grove, Nottingham.  
 (July, 1895).
- ROWE, Lady, Bridge Hall Farm, Burgess Hill, Sussex. (Dec., 1895).
- SALT, Dr. E. G., 50, George Square, Edinburgh. (July, 1895).
- SAVAGE, Mr. A., 3, Rue Bihorel, Bihorel, Rouen, Seine Inférieure, France.  
 (April, 1895).
- SAVEGE, Dr. GEORGE, 24, Railway Street, Beverley. (Oct., 1896).
- SCRIVENS, Miss, Millfield, Bexhill-on-Sea, Sussex. (July, 1895).
- SEAMAN, Mrs., 30, Elvaston Place, Queen's Gate, S.W. (May, 1897).
- SECRETARY, The, Natural History Society, Rugby School, Rugby.  
 (Orig. Mem.)
- SERGEANT, Mr. J., 10, London Street, Southport. (Orig. Mem.) \*
- SETH-SMITH, Mr. DAVID, Wilford House, 22, Shorncliffe Road, Folkestone.  
 (Dec., 1894).
- SHARP, Miss, M.D., Spring Gardens, Ringwood, Hants. (Orig. Mem.)
- SHERBROOKE, Mrs. K., Keldholme Priory, Kirkbymoorside, Yorkshire.  
 (March, 1897).
- SIMPSON, Dr. C. S., 2, Portland Road, Hove. (Orig. Mem.) \*

- SIVEWRIGHT, Miss H. A., The Rise, Headington Hill, Oxford. (Dec., 1895).  
 SLATER, Mr. ARTHUR A., Windleshaw House, St. Helen's. (Nov., 1894).  
 SMART, Mr. JOHN, 12, Royal Crescent, Edinburgh. (Nov., 1894).  
 SMITH, Mr. H. B., Grangefield, Park Road South, Birkenhead. (June, 1895).  
 SMITH, Mr. A. C., Broad Street, Bungay. (Feb., 1896). \*  
 SMITH, Mr. E. E., 133, Alderson Road, Sheffield. (Oct., 1898).  
 SPEED, Mr. CHARLES, 42, Garth Road, Bangor. (Dec., 1894).  
 ST. QUINTIN, Mr. W. H., Scampston Hall, Rillington, York. (Orig. Mem.)  
 STAINES, Mr. E. P., 112, Woodbine Grove, Penge. (May, 1897).  
 STANSFELD, Mr. JOHN, Dunninald, Montrose, N.B. (Dec., 1896).  
 STANYFORTH, Mrs., Kirk Hammerton Hall, York. (Nov., 1897).  
 STORY, Mr. J., 7, Blenheim Terrace, St. John's Wood, N.W. (Orig. Mem.)\*  
 STURTON-JOHNSON, Miss, Ortava House, Ore, Hastings. (May, 1897).  
 SWAILES, Mr. GEORGE C., Beverley, Yorkshire. (June, 1895).  
 SWAYSLAND, Mr. WALTER, 184, Western Road, Brighton. (Orig. Mem.)\*  
 SWINFEN-BROUN, Mrs. LAURA, Swinfen Hall, Lichfield. (Feb., 1898).  
  
 TATE, Mr. ALAN, 229, Allen Street, Sheffield. (June, 1897).  
 TAYLOR, Mr. E., 22, Thornton's Arcade, Leeds. (June, 1895). \*  
 THOM, Mr. A. A., Birkacre House, Birkacre, near Chorley. (June, 1895). \*  
 THOMAS, Mr. HENRY, 78, Harlow Terrace, Harrogate. (Jan., 1895).  
 THOMASSET, Mr. BERNARD C., West Wickham, by Beckenham, Kent.  
 (July, 1896).  
 THOMPSON, Mr. ARTHUR H., St. Medard's, Darlington. (May, 1895).  
 THOMPSON, Mrs. WALDEGRAVE, St. Brélade's, Rivercourt Road,  
 Hammersmith, W. (Dec., 1895).  
 THOYTS, Miss E. E., Sulhampstead Park, Berkshire. (Nov., 1894). \*  
 THURSBY, Mrs., Bank Hall, Burnley. (June, 1895). \*  
 TINNE, Mrs. J. C., Bashleigh Lodge, Lymington, Hants. (Sept. 1898).  
 TODD, Mr. R. A., Honeyden, Foot's Cray, Kent. (June, 1895).  
 TOPHAM, Mr. WILLIAM, The Hill, Spondon, Derby. (Feb., 1895). \*  
 TOWNEND, Mr. FRANK H., 26, Dornton Road, South Croydon, Surrey.  
 (May, 1895). \*  
 TOWNSEND, Mr. STANLEY M., 80, Chesilton Road, Fulham, S. W.  
 (Sept. 1898).  
 TREVOR - BATTYE, Mr. AUBYN, 2, Whitehall Gardens, Westminster.  
 (July, 1898).  
 TURNER, Mr. THOMAS, J.P., Cullompton, Devon. (Dec., 1895).  
  
 VERRALL, Mr. CLAUDE H., Johannesburg, Streatham Common, S. W.  
 (May, 1897).  
  
 WARD, The Hon. Mrs. SOMERSET, Isle o' Valla House, Downpatrick,  
 Ireland. (August, 1897).  
 WADHAM, Mr. PERCY, 30, Holyrood Street, Newport, Isle of Wight.  
 (April, 1898).  
 WALKER, Miss H. K. O., Chesham, Bury, Lancashire. (Feb., 1895).  
 WALKER, Mrs. ARTHUR, 48, Cranley Gardens, South Kensington, S.W.  
 (April, 1898).  
 WEBB, Mr. ARTHUR W., Primrose Club, Park Place, St. James's,  
 London, W. (March, 1896).  
 WELLS, Mr. H., Colon, Chapel Road, Worthing. (Nov., 1896).



- WEST, Miss E. E., The Homestead, Hawthorne Road, Bickley Park, Kent.  
(April, 1898). \*
- WHYTEHEAD, Mr. GODFREE Y., 6, Bootham Terrace, York. (April, 1897).
- WHYTEHEAD, Mr. T. B., Acombe House, York. (April, 1897).
- WIENER, Mr. AUG. F., 2, Upper Bedford Place, Russell Square, W.C.  
(July, 1896).
- WILDE, Miss, Little Gaddesden, Berkhamstead. (Dec., 1896).
- WILKINSON, Miss BEATRICE, End Cliffe, Manor Road, Edgbaston,  
Birmingham. (Dec., 1894).
- WILLIAMS, Mr. HOWARD, 4, Highbury Grove, London, N. (April, 1895).
- WILLIAMS, Mrs. LESLIE, 8, George Street, Bathwick, Bath. (June, 1895).
- WILLIAMS, Dr. J. D., 93, Newport Road, Cardiff. (Feb., 1897).
- WILLIAMSON, Mrs. D., Merrow Dene, Epsom Road, Guildford.  
(August, 1898).
- WINCHILSEA and NOTTINGHAM, The Dowager Countess of, 6, Bedford  
Square, London, W.C. (May, 1895).
- WORDSWORTH, Miss A. M., 149, King Richard's Road, Leicester.  
(April, 1895).
- WRIGHT, Mrs. G. J., 3, Rose Villas, Picton Road, Ramsgate. (Feb., 1898).

## DECEASED MEMBERS.

1894.

Lady MACDONALD. (Orig. Mem.)

1895.

Mr. H. HOLLOWAY. (July, 1895).

1896.

Mr. ROBERT DASHWOOD. (Orig. Mem.) \*

Mr. H. C. GREAME. (June, 1895).

The Hon. MARIQUITA MILLES. (Dec., 1894).

1897.

Mr. HENRY ERSKINE ALLON, M.A. (Feb., 1896).

Mr. WILLIAM THOMPSON. (May, 1897).

1898.

Mr. E. G. HALLAM. (June, 1895).

Mr. D. MEINERTZHAGEN. (Dec., 1896).

## RULES OF THE AVICULTURAL SOCIETY.

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1.—The name of the Society shall be "THE AVICULTURAL SOCIETY," and its object shall be the study of Foreign and British Birds. Poultry, Pigeons and Canaries shall be outside the scope of the Society.

2.—The officers of the Society shall be elected annually by the members in manner hereinafter provided, and shall consist of a President, one or more Vice-Presidents, a Treasurer, a Secretary, an Auditor, a Scrutineer, and a Council of twelve members. The Secretary and Treasurer shall be *ex officio* members of the Council.

3.—Each member shall pay an annual subscription of 7/6, to be due and payable in advance on the 1st of November in each year. New members shall pay an entrance fee of 2/6. Any member whose subscription or entrance fee shall be four months overdue shall cease to be a member of the Society, and notice of his having ceased to be a member, and of the cause, shall be inserted in the Magazine.

4.—New members shall be proposed in writing; and the name and address of every person thus proposed, with the name of the member proposing him, shall be published in the next issue of the Magazine. Unless the candidate shall, within two weeks after the publication of his name in the Magazine, be objected to by at least two members, he shall be deemed to be duly elected. If five members shall lodge with the Secretary objections to any candidate he shall not be elected, but the signatures to the signed objections must be verified by the Scrutineer. If two or more members (but less than five) shall object to any candidate, the Secretary shall announce in the next number of the Magazine that such objections have been lodged (but shall not disclose the names of the objectors), and shall request the members to vote upon the question of the election of such candidate. Members shall record their votes in sealed letters addressed to the Scrutineer, and a candidate shall not be elected unless two-thirds of the votes recorded be in his favour; nor shall a candidate be elected if five or more votes be recorded against his election.

5.—The Magazine of the Society shall be issued on the first day of every month, and forwarded, post free, to each member. The Secretary shall have an absolute discretion as to what matter shall be published in the Magazine (subject to the control of the Council). The Secretary shall refer all matters of doubt or difficulty to the Council. The decision of the majority of the Council shall be final and conclusive in all matters.

6.—The election of officers shall take place every year between the 1st and 14th of October. All candidates must be proposed by one member and seconded by another member (in writing) before they shall be eligible for election; but this shall not apply to officers willing to stand for re-election to the same office. All such proposals which have been duly seconded must be sent to the Secretary before the 14th of September. The Secretary shall prepare a voting paper containing a list of the candidates, showing the offices for which they are respectively seeking election or re-election, and shall send a copy of such voting paper to each member of the Society with the October number of the Magazine. Each member shall make a cross (X) opposite the names of those for whom he desires to vote,

and shall sign the voting paper at the foot, and send it to the Scrutineer in a sealed envelope, before the 14th of October. The Scrutineer shall prepare a written return of the officers elected, showing the number of the votes recorded for each candidate, and send it to the Secretary before the 21st of October, for publication in the November number of the Magazine. In the event of an equality of votes, the President shall have a casting vote.

7.—It shall be lawful for the Council to delegate any of their powers to a Committee of not less than three.

8.—The Council (but not a Committee of the Council) shall have power to alter and add to the Rules, from time to time, in any manner they may think fit.

9.—The Council shall have power to expel any member from the Society at any time, without assigning any reason.

10.—All members intending to resign their membership at the end of the current year of the Society shall give notice of their intention to the Secretary before the 14th October, and all members who do not so give notice shall continue to be members for the year following, and shall be liable for their subscriptions accordingly.

11.—Neither the office of Scrutineer nor the office of Auditor shall be held for two consecutive years by the same person.

12.—The Scrutineer shall not reveal to any person how any member shall have voted.

13.—If any office shall become vacant at any time, other than at the end of the Society's year, the Council shall have power to nominate any member of the Society to fill the vacancy until the expiration of the then current year.

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## THE SOCIETY'S MEDAL.

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The Medal is awarded to every member who succeeds in breeding any species of bird which has not previously been known to breed in captivity in this country. Any member wishing to obtain the Medal must send a detailed account to the Secretary within eight weeks from the date of hatching of the young, and furnish such evidence of the facts as the Executive Committee may require. The Medal will be awarded only in cases where the young shall live to be old enough to feed themselves, and to be independent of their parents. The decision of the Committee shall be final.

The Medal is struck in bronze, and measures  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter. It bears on the obverse a representation of two birds with a nest containing eggs, and the words "The Avicultural Society—Founded 1894." On the reverse is the following inscription: "Awarded to (*name of donee*) for rearing of young of (*name of species*) a species not previously bred in captivity in the United Kingdom."

### *Members to whom Medals have been Awarded.*

Mr. R. A. TODD, for breeding *Poephila acuticauda* in 1897.

Mr. GEORGE E. BOUSKILL, for breeding *Cyanorhamphus auriceps* in 1897.

# THE AVICULTURAL SOCIETY.

BALANCE SHEET FOR THE YEAR 1897-8.

## Receipts.

	£	s.	d.
Balance from last year .. ..	2	17	10
283 Members' Subscriptions at 5/- .. ..	70	15	0
51 Entrance Fees at 2/6 .. ..	6	7	6
Special Subscriptions for Hand-coloured Plates .. ..	30	11	3
Trade Advertisements .. ..	6	17	6
Members' Advertisements .. ..	3	3	9
Arrears of Subscriptions and Entrance Fees from last year .. ..	0	15	0
Donation by a Member .. ..	0	2	6
Sales by Publishers (including cases for binding) less their commission .. ..	14	15	11

£136 6 3

O. ERNEST CRESSWELL, *Treasurer.*

## Expenditure.

Subscriptions and Entrance fees in arrear Printing Magazines .. ..	1	5	0
Stationery and Miscellaneous Printing (including Envelopes for Magazines and Strawboard) .. ..	57	9	9
Cases for Binding and Binding Stock Copies Cost of Illustrations in Magazine.. ..	7	16	6
Carriage of Magazines by rail to Publishers, &c. .. ..	3	9	0
Publishers' fee for addressing and dispatching Magazines to Members .. ..	35	1	6
Cost of Medals (including die) .. ..	1	2	0
Postage of Magazines .. ..	1	10	0
Postage (Secretary and Executive Committee) Sundries .. ..	10	5	6
Purchase of copies of Magazine for January and February, 1898.. ..	11	14	11
Balance carried forward to next year .. ..	6	0	6
	0	3	0
	0	4	0
	0	4	7

£136 6 3

Examined with Vouchers and found correct.

JOHN SERGEANT, *Auditor.*



# Avicultural Magazine,

BEING THE JOURNAL OF THE

AVICULTURAL SOCIETY.

VOL. V.—No. 49.

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NOVEMBER, 1898.

## BREEDING OF THE CHINESE PAINTED QUAIL.

*Excalfactoria chinensis.*

By E. G. B. MEADE-WALDO.

The interesting letter of Mr. Seth-Smith, describing the nesting of his Chinese Quails, induces me to record the successful rearing of a bevy of these charming little birds in one of my aviaries this summer.

The cock bird is a very old one, and has wintered out for several years (including the bitter winter of 1895), in the East Riding of Yorkshire. The hen was kindly presented to me this spring, by Mr. Reginald Phillipps. When placed together, the little birds paired at once: the cock holding any little tit-bit in his beak, with his head held on one side, uttering a low crooning sound until the hen ran up and took it from him.

A nest was scratched in the turf, and the first egg laid on June 12th; twenty-one eggs were laid by July 3rd, on which day the hen commenced to sit. As the number of eggs seemed so disproportionate to the size of the bird, I removed ten, leaving eleven in the nest. The hen made up the nest by drawing in grass stems, and the like, but no feathers at all were added, as is the case with all the true Partridges, Pheasants, etc. The hen sat exceedingly well, the cock occasionally sitting by her side but never on the eggs.

On July 23rd the hen came off with seven young ones, leaving one dead in the nest. These little birds were most marvellously active and independent, being able to run quite as fast as the parents on the day of hatching. They were, of course, very small indeed, but still they looked far too large for the eggs they had just come out of. They were dark chocolate in colour, with two broad dull yellow lines down the back, and three yellow stripes on the head. They fed principally on ants' eggs—part of an ants' nest being supplied in a tray twice a-day;

they also ate the ants themselves. From the first, however, they would eat mawseed, also the seeds of various weeds. Their growth was most wonderfully rapid, as will be seen by the following dates :

Hatched on July 23rd ; August 5th, full fledged, able to fly well ; August 13th, the two young cocks easily distinguishable from the hens ; August 20th, full grown and almost in full plumage ; August 27th, young cocks in full plumage, indistinguishable from the parent, and *crowing and calling the hens to feed*.

The precocity of these little birds was most remarkable, especially in gallinaceous birds, where the assumption of full plumage (especially where the males differ greatly in plumage from the females) is usually a very lengthy process, spread at least over some months ; in this bird at five weeks old they were apparently adult.

A prettier sight than this little family are now can hardly be imagined. To escape the burning sun of the last few weeks they have made little runs all through the grass of their lawn, like those made by colonies of field voles. They have little seats under tufts of grass, and in looking at the grass nothing whatever is visible. Suddenly a little head pokes up through the grass and crows ; then another and another peer out in different places, and answer ; then they all settle down again, having assured one another that they are all there. Occasionally two sit in the same little form, but usually only one.

I forgot to describe the eggs, which were yellowish stone colour, covered with small spots and dots of very dark brown. The eggs were large for the size of the bird.

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## BREEDING VIRGINIAN CARDINALS.

### I.

By the Rev. C. D. FARRAR.

Virginian Cardinals are probably familiar to almost all the readers of the *Avicultural Magazine*. In almost every bird shop, at a certain season of the year, you may see one or two unhappy cocks of this species, looking extremely sick and sorry.

In buying Virginian Cardinals let me give a word of caution : Buy them as soon after they arrive as possible, as a very short stay in a dealer's cage will be fatal, for there the seeds of consumption will be laid which will sooner or later end the career of your purchase.

When once acclimatised, Virginians are hardy enough, and will stand all weathers with perfect impunity, except fog; but I have always found newly-come-over specimens exceedingly delicate. Indeed, I should be ashamed to say how many I have lost in acclimatising my present pair. But then, it doesn't do to speak of losses!

I see that people often complain that they cannot keep their Cardinals in colour. I fancy that the reason is 'wrong feeding.' Hempseed is usually recommended, and if used freely I believe it will turn any bird nearly black. I know it will Bullfinches—a 'black' Bullfinch is simply a bird that has been fed on hemp. My Cardinals never have hemp; they have canary, millet and live food *ad libitum*: and the cock is the most glorious colour you ever saw; a perfect blaze of scarlet.

When newly imported, Virginians are usually badly knocked about, and deficient in wings and tail. I always pull out all the broken stumps, and cage the birds until the new feathers are come. This takes about six weeks.

My birds are out of doors all the year round in a big garden aviary, among all sorts and conditions of birds; and though there are nests and young all round them, the Cardinals maintain the path of virtue; in fact they are the most inoffensive birds I know of.

Last year I came pretty near to success; but just as the nest was finished, the hen got a tumour on her breast and I had to kill her. I soon got a new hen, but the season had gone by.

This year the Cardinals began pretty early with nesting operations. The cock came into song about March, and soon after the hen began to carry about sticks and straws, but seemed unable to find a place to her mind, and went and laid three eggs on the bare ground. These are very small for the size of the bird, and exactly like the egg of the common House Sparrow. I was rather sickened over this, and thought I was to have no luck; the more so as having the choice of two nests in the garden to put them in—a Chaffinch's and a Robin's—I selected the Robin's, as I thought it most hidden, and of course I chose the wrong one; for the next day some young calves in the field got nosing about, and put their heads into the nest (it was in a hole in a stump) and smashed all the eggs. That was finish No. 1.

About ten days later, the hen laid two more eggs and again on the bare ground, and as I could not find a nest to put them in I gave them to one of my children. Finish No. 2.

About a fortnight after this I happened to go into the aviary and, quite by chance, found the hen Virginian had built a nest in a bush, neatly lined with dry roots, and had two eggs. I looked next day and still only two eggs (much to my joy, as I knew two would take me plenty of rearing) and the hen sitting steadily. A curious thing happened now, for whereas until then the hen had been most 'scary,' she would now let me go quite close to her without coming off.

The cock now sang magnificently, especially in the evening; but he took no part at all in incubation (although we are told that the cock always sits on the nest when the hen leaves it). Before the sitting commenced he was most attentive in feeding the hen; and all through the time of incubation he fed his wife assiduously. They feed from the crop.

All went well, and on the 13th day, on looking into the nest as I passed—July 8th—I found that both eggs had hatched. The young are queer looking little beggars covered over with very dark fluff, like young Bullfinches. I watched the process of feeding with great interest. The *modus operandi* was as follows: The cock arrived at the nest-side at stated intervals and fed the hen from the crop; she then gently raised herself in the nest and fed the young. For a week I think she hardly ever left the nest. All feeding was done by the cock. I gave them peas, strawberries, cherries, maggots, and mealworms, in addition to seed. At the end of a week the young had grown famously, and were a sort of coffee colour. On the eighth day the eyes opened; on the tenth they were well feathered; colour, a sort of dark brown; and to-day, July 18th, to my intense surprise, they have left the nest—I can't say *flown*, rather they have hopped out. I found them quite happy, on the floor in the midst of an admiring throng of Pekin Robins and their own proud and happy parents. They are queer little mortals with small crests, no tails, and enormous legs and feet. The funny thing is, the Pekin Robins feed them as well as their own parents.

The most wonderful part of the whole proceeding, to my mind, is this, that these birds have been reared in an aviary in which I have, besides the parents, two pairs of Pekin Robins and a pair of Shâmas. It only shows what can be done.

One other thing I have noticed, my Virginians hardly ever erect their crests; whereas in a cage they are always on end.

I ought also to say that for five days I was ill in bed, after the hatching, and the birds were fed by Mrs. Farrar; so that she must share the credit of our success.



I have been taken to task over my last article on Pekin Robins, because I ventured to run counter to the 'authorities.' Nevertheless, I must do so again here.

Mr. Gedney says that the four eggs were laid at intervals during *eight days*. All I can say is, mine laid every day like a well regulated bird. The cock, again, is stated to have *settled down upon the eggs in the hen's absence*. Mine was never so incautious.

The young were *hatched quite naked*. Mine were covered over with dark fluff.

The young, says Mr. Gedney, fledge rapidly, and leave the nest at the end of *five weeks*. I can only say with Dominie Sampson, Prodigious!!! Mine must have been very previous; as they left at the end of *ten days*!

Judging from "internal evidence," I should doubt Mr. Gedney's account of the nesting of the Virginian Cardinal.

## II.

By the Rev. H. D. ASTLEY.

Even to those uninterested in the ways and habits of birds, the following experiment must prove attractive. Experiment is hardly the word, for it was by an accident that a pair of Virginian Cardinals (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) made their escape from a large pheasantry, where they had been for two years, and had become inured to the many atmospheric changes of our climate; not that they are ever delicate birds, for they make little of a November fog or a January snowstorm. However, they escaped on the 15th of May (1885), and as they kept about I did not take much trouble to get them in again, but put out their tin of canary seed so that they might not starve, and also as an extra inducement for them not to wander far from home. The pheasantry in which they had been confined is situated amongst bushes, and close by a rookery, which is all paled in, and adjoins the front garden lawns and a fairly large shrubbery, the home of many a bird; rich in the growth of syringas, lilacs, box trees, and many other shrubs, amongst which spring up old elms, limes and firs. To this retreat, the Virginian Cardinals soon found their way, and the following morning after their escape, on going through the shrubbery, I saw the cock bird perched on the tip-top of a hawthorn. There he was, singing as loud and as fast as the notes would come, his beautiful scarlet breast looking more brilliant than usual in the



full morning sun of a May day, whilst the intense green of the hawthorn showed up the bird in strong relief. I felt as I saw him, that it was a sight that few, if any, in England were enjoying at that moment, or indeed at any other time, for I have never before heard of these American cousins being allowed their full liberty. Two days after this, in a very bare yew shrub, for it was nothing more, I observed a nest commenced. Although I never imagined that the Cardinals had already set to work, yet the nest struck me as being built of an unusual material, and its general appearance convinced me that no British bird with which I was familiar was constructing it. The nest was a very frail one, with no substantial foundation; merely bits of dead grass and some old pieces of rush lightly interwoven, the whole structure being decidedly small for the size of the bird; in fact, a Greenfinch would seem a more suitable occupant for it than its real owner.

The shrub stands at a corner where four paths meet, and is therefore the most exposed position a bird could choose for such an object. The same day that I discovered the commencement of this nest, the gardener told me that he had actually seen the hen Virginian on it, whilst the cock bird perched himself on the top of the shrub. Exactly a week after they had escaped, the first egg was laid; it was rather larger than a Sparrow's in size, and dirty white in colour, with large blotches of reddish-brown, thicker at the round end than at the other. The hen laid five eggs in as many consecutive days. To protect such an exposed position, I tied some branches of yew all over the bush, thereby making it difficult for passers-by to see the bird on her nest.

Four young birds were successfully hatched, the fifth egg being unfertile. The cock bird almost entirely ceased singing after the young were hatched, and his state of alarm was great if anyone passed near the nest. The eggs took exactly a fortnight to hatch. This brood of young Virginians soon came to grief; a bird or a beast of some kind (it is not known what, but Jays were the suspected culprits) made off with a couple. The two remaining birds I tried to rear by hand, but they seemed unable to digest the food and, to my grief, died. The old couple at once began hunting for another nesting place and fixed upon one quite close to the former site, but this time in a low box bush. The nest was quickly finished and four eggs deposited in it, strict injunctions being given to the gardeners not to disturb it in any way; and in order to try and guard against robbery from mice or squirrels, I tarred the stem of the bush as

far as I could and also placed some more branches of box upon the thinner parts at the top, so as to hide the eggs from prying eyes of unfriendly feathered fowl. But no! after the hen bird had sat out more than half her time, the eggs disappeared, and—disappointment No. 2.

The Virginian Cardinals themselves seemed to lose less heart than I did, for they actually commenced another nest the day after they had lost their second hope of a brood, and, *experientia docens*, they built their third nest in a holly tree of a somewhat weeping growth, placing it in the under side of an overhanging branch about 9ft. from the ground. Four eggs were again laid and hatched on the 5th of August of the same year (1885) in which the parents had escaped: but when the young birds, which grew apacè, were about a week old once more two disappeared, evidently taken by a Jay or a Squirrel, for the nest was rather demolished, so in despair the other two were carried into the shelter of the house. One was considerably larger than the other, and it was this one that succumbed in a day or two, either to injuries or indigestion; the other bird, an ugly uncouth little creature, was fed upon sopped bread and plenty of fruit—strawberries, grapes, etc. He thrived, and he turned out luckily to be a male bird. I had him for several years in his splendid scarlet plumage, insolently tame, and a delightful pet. He attained his red coat in the late autumn to a great degree, though, perhaps owing to the vicissitudes of his early life, not nearly so bright in colour as he became in his second year. To any stranger approaching his cage with friendliness, he would put up his crest and sing himself hoarse, and if allowed to come out, he would fly to one's shoulder and with grotesque movements shout into one's ear.

I must add that the parent birds, after having been decoyed back again into the pheasantry, were once more released in the following spring, much to their delight. They built again, but the hen bird, after laying two eggs, was found dead.

This year (1898) I turned out a pair of Virginians in April, which are still at large, and are to be seen, most days, flitting about among the trees, or across the lawns. They built a nest in June, but the heavy rains in the early part of the month seemed to damp their ardour, and they forsook just before the eggs, three in number, were due to hatch. Unlike the former pair, they have not nested again.

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# THE CRYSTAL PALACE SHOW OF OCTOBER, 1898.

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## INTRODUCTORY.

The Show of British and Foreign Birds, and Hybrids, held at the Crystal Palace, on the 4th, 5th, and 6th of October, by the National British Bird and Mule Club and the Foreign Bird Exhibitors' League, was a notable event in the history of Bird Shows, because it marks the emancipation of the exhibiting aviculturists from the bondage of the Canary "fancy" to which they had hitherto been subject.

The Show was an unqualified success, and reflects great credit upon Mr. FROSTICK, the energetic Hon. Secretary, and upon the Show Committee. (I think I may say this without appearing to blow my own trumpet, for, although a member of the Committee, I must confess that I only attended one meeting).

A remarkable feature was the almost entire absence of "wrongly classed" entries. I could only find one such entry in the Foreign classes—an unfortunate pair of Bengalese which had somehow got into Class 65. This proves what can be done to prevent (by careful drafting of the Schedule, and the kindly help of the Secretary) what is usually considered an unavoidable incident of Bird Shows.

It is to be regretted that the classes for common Waxbills and Grassfinches were so badly filled. These classes are new, and exhibitors are a curiously conservative race. Probably many thought that these classes would be over-crowded, and refrained from making entries in them for that reason. I believe that if they be repeated next year, the result will be quite different.

Considering the number of Bulbuls which appeared at the Palace in February, it is singular that the Bulbul class had to be cancelled at this Show.

HORATIO R. FILLMER.

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## BRITISH BIRDS.

As regards British birds, it is rather doubtful whether the commencement of October is the most suitable time to hold a Show: many being scarcely through the moult by that time and, therefore, not in show form. This being so, one was almost surprised to find so large a number of specimens, mostly of grand quality, staged at Sydenham on the 4th, 5th, and 6th of the month.

Neither the Bullfinches nor the Goldfinches were quite in show form : probably a month later they would have looked decidedly better. The Chaffinches, on the other hand, were a remarkably fine lot ; the first and second prize-winners being especially fine specimens. There was also a good collection of Linnets and the competition was very keen. The winner of the first prize was a grand bird, in splendid feather and very steady. Several others, however, ran it very close.

The Twites and Redpolls also formed a large class, a grand specimen of the former species taking the first prize. A very large Redpoll, unusually light on the breast, although an undoubted specimen of *A. rufescens*, was a good second.

Class 6 (Siskins) contained some very nice birds. The winner of the first prize was a very highly-coloured bird, and strongly suggested colour feeding. The second was equally good, but not so bright in colour.

Class 7 (All other species of Resident Finches and Buntings). This class contained chiefly Hawfinches and Yellow Buntings. The first prize-winner—a Hawfinch—was a very fine specimen, in beautiful plumage. A very bright Yellow-hammer was second. Miss Hopwood's Reed-bunting was a very fair specimen, and there was also a Cirl Bunting—a species far more common in many parts than is usually supposed.

The Class for Migratory Finches and Buntings consisted chiefly of Bramblings. The first prize winner was far the best, being unusually rich in colour for the time of the year. A nice Mealy Redpoll was second, the other prizes going to Bramblefinches.

The Skylarks were not a large class, but the few there were, were of great merit. Mr. May's bird, which was placed first, was one of the best Larks I have ever seen. The Robins were good : the first and second prize winners being beauties, but not so steady as they might have been. Some grand Blackbirds were shown : the winner of the first prize being, to my mind, quite perfect.

Song-thrushes were also an especially fine class, and there was little to choose between the winners of the first three prizes. The Starlings did not form a large class, but were of very good quality ; Mr. Fulljames' " Jacob "—the first-prize winner—is an old friend and an exceedingly nice bird.

Class 14 (Magpies, Jackdaws, Jays and Choughs).—Mr. Fulljames' Chough was a perfect specimen, and well deserved the first place of honour. The second prize went to a nice Magpie,



which, however, appeared to have one hind toe slightly deformed. A Jackdaw was third, and a Jay fourth; both were exceedingly good birds.

Class 15 contained some very interesting "rare feathered specimens of British birds." Mr. Fulljames' Cinnamon Starling was easily first: it was a charming bird. The second prize went to a small and insignificant-looking Pied Wheatear, of small interest compared with the White Whitethroat shown by Mr. Fishburn, which I think should have been placed second: it was not an albino, having dark eyes, and showing one or two dark feathers on the back. A Cinnamon Blackbird, sent by Mr. Fulljames, was placed third; and a Cinnamon Chaffinch, belonging to the same gentleman, obtained the fourth prize. Other interesting exhibits in this class were a White Linnet, a Cinnamon Yellowhammer and a Yellow Greenfinch, all shown by Mr. G. C. Swailes.

Class 16 (All other species of Resident Insectivorous Birds not larger than a Woodlark). This was a very interesting class, and contained some birds very rarely seen in captivity. A Tree-creeper obtained the first prize, and, considering the difficulty there must be in keeping this bird in captivity, it deserved all it got. A Wren, shown by Mr. Maxwell, obtained the second prize: it looked happy and contented enough, but it would have stood little chance against a very nice pair of the same species (No. 215) which were entered in this class, but for some reason did not turn up until the judging was finished. A lovely Grey Wagtail (catalogued as a Pied) was deservedly third, and a nice Pied obtained the fourth prize. There were two Stonechats in this class: one was a nice bird, but the other was too ill to swallow a mealworm on the first day. Mr. Maxwell exhibited a beautiful Long-tailed Titmouse (*Acredula rosea*) which only received a V.H.C. card, although it surely deserved something more. Mr. Fulljames' exhibit (No. 230) was a typical specimen of the Continental form of the Long-tailed Tit, known to ornithologists as *Acredula caudata*, and differing from the British form by the absence of any dark markings on the head. A nice Crested Titmouse, a rare British bird nowadays, and a female Bearded Tit or Reedling were about the only other birds of especial interest in the class.

Class 17 was devoted to the larger Insectivorous Residents. No less than seven Greater Spotted Woodpeckers (*Dendrocopos major*) were here shown, but one pair did not arrive in time for competition. With regard to this species, it should be remem-



bered that the young birds have the *entire crown* crimson ; in the adult male there is a patch of crimson at the *back of the head*, the crown being black. In the adult female there is no trace of red on the back of the head or neck.

The winner of the first prize, and its next door neighbour, were illustrations of how a Woodpecker should, and how it should *not*, be exhibited. Mr. Barnes' beautiful female, which well deserved her first prize, was shown in a very suitable cage in which an artificial log of cork-bark had been fixed. With this the bird was perfectly happy and contented ; and it was most entertaining to watch it take a nut from the food-tin and insert it carefully in a hole in the log, where, with rapid and powerful blows from its bill, the shell was soon smashed and the kernel was quickly devoured. The other, No. 236, which one could not help pitying and comparing its surroundings with those of its neighbour, was not, in itself, a bad specimen ; but it was a great pity that its owner was not better acquainted with the nature of a Woodpecker than to send it to a Show in a cage made for a Norwich Canary. The poor creature kept trying in vain to climb the sides of its prison, where it could obtain no foothold, and, when it hopped on to its perch, it fell backwards upon its tail, until, finally, it gave up all attempts at perching, and lay down on the bottom of its cage.

A lovely Missel Thrush, very tame and absolutely perfect, was deservedly second, and another of the same species, and almost equally good, took the third prize ; the fourth going to another Great Spotted Woodpecker.

Class 18 contained a fine collection of Nightingales, and it was not easy to say which was the best bird : personally, I preferred the winner of the second prize to the one awarded first. A nice Blackcap was fourth.

Some very interesting birds were exhibited in the class for smaller Migrants. It was most unfortunate that those entered by Mr. George Jeffrey did not arrive until just before the Show was opened to the public, and, consequently, much too late for competition. The winner of the first prize was by far the best Yellow Wagtail that I remember to have seen ; it was sent by Mr. Wm. Cullen, and claimed at the Catalogue-price of £5 5s. 6d. A Whinchat was awarded an extra first prize ; Miss Hopwood's Wheatear was a good second. There were some very beautiful Redstarts : one exceptionally fine specimen, shown by Mr. Maxwell, obtained an extra second prize ; a Spotted Flycatcher,

shown by the same gentleman, obtained third, and extra thirds were awarded to a Yellow Wagtail and a Redstart.

Several Swallows were shown in this class, and, although some of these were much better birds than many that have at former Shows taken first and second prizes, none of those here exhibited obtained very high honours. Swallows always look miserable and sadly out of place in cages, and it is satisfactory to find that the Judge did not encourage the capture of a bird so perfectly adapted to a life in the air and so hopelessly miserable in captivity. Several Whitethroats, Yellow Wagtails, a Red-backed Shrike, and a nice Garden Warbler were also shown in this class, which contained nearly sixty entries, some of which, however, were absent.

Class 20 (All other species of Migratory Insectivorous Birds). Five very good Ring Ouzels were shown in this class, the first, second and third prizes going to these birds; the fourth was won by a nice Redwing. A miserable young Cuckoo was shown here also, and illustrated clearly the folly, not to say cruelty, of caging this species.

The last class that I have to mention was, to me, the most interesting, as it contained several species of European birds which are not usually recognised as our fellow-countrymen. A very fine specimen of *Acredula caudata*, before mentioned as the Continental form of our Long-tailed Titmouse (*A. rosea*) was, rightly, I think, shown in this class by Mr. Maxwell; it did not receive a card, and I find on referring to the Catalogue, that it is therein marked "Wrong Class." Why this should be is not clear. I have not the N. B. B. and M. C. list of British birds by me, but I should be much surprised to hear that the *White-headed* form of the Long-tailed Tit is therein included. Some ornithologists do not recognise it as a good species, but it is, at any rate, a very well-defined sub-species, and is certainly not British although undoubtedly European.

Mr. Fulljames took all the prizes in this class, his rare Warbler, which I took to be *Hypolais polyglotta* (but on this point I am not certain) taking first. A Blue-throat, a most beautiful specimen, which appeared to belong to the Southern or White-spotted race (*Cyanecula wolff*), was second. A nice specimen of the Greater Nightingale or Sprosser (*Daulias philomela*)—difficult to distinguish by the light in the tent from our *D. luscinia*—third; and a magnificent Rock Thrush fourth. The Rock Thrushes are a connecting link between the true Thrushes and the Chats, and the Chat-like habit of shaking the tail was

very noticeable in Mr. Fulljames' bird. A very fine pair of Hobbies (*Falco subbuteo*) and a Calandra Lark (*Melanocorypha calandra*) were also shown in this class.

D. SETH-SMITH.

## PARROTS.

I may, perhaps, be expected to give a few notes on the classes I judged at the League's first Show, held at the Crystal Palace, on October 4th, 5th, and 6th.

As far as the Parrots were concerned, it was not a very good show. It is useless to expect one, unless better prizes can be offered, and a knowledge of the show brought home to the many possessors of Parrots scattered throughout the country. It has probably never dawned upon the minds of the greater part of them that there is such a thing as a Parrot Show: and, if it has, they would not risk their pets on a journey for prizes of 15/-, 10/-, 5/-, and 2/6. To say nothing of the risk and trouble of sending the birds, the prizes will not repay entry fees and carriage. The public is indebted for such interest as the shows have to the competition of two or three great exhibitors, like Mr. Fulljames, Mr. Maxwell, and Mr. H. B. Smith; though, every now and then, an interesting exhibit, such as Mr. Cocksedge's Red-mantled Parrakeets, is found in a single entry.

My first class was "Lories and Lorikeets," which had 14 entries, of which two, if not three, were absent. In this class I gave the 1st prize to a Forsten's Lorikeet, shown by Mr. Arthur in admirable trim (*a*); 2nd and 3rd went to Scaly-breasted Lorikeets—the two exhibits were equally smooth and glossy, but I gave 2nd to the pair as it is more difficult to show a good pair than one. Fourth went to a Blue Mountain, belonging to Mr. Silk. Reserve I gave to a bird entered as a Purple-breasted Lory (*b*)—this was the most uncommon bird in the class. Mr. Cushny showed a Ceram Lory in very good plumage. Mr. Maxwell's Ornamented lacked brilliancy of colour, and so did the Blue Mountains. Mr. Smith showed two Rubras, but they were too rough in plumage to obtain notice. It is a pity to show Parrots in what are called exhibition cages: it is absolutely impossible to judge a bird unless you can see all round it, and any Judge may be pardoned for passing a Parrot in such a cage. A Musky Lorikeet, shown by Mr. Frostick, was too sleepy to win a card.

(*a*) Mr. Arthur tells me that this bird has acquired a taste for canary-seed, and now will not touch anything else.—F. G. D.

(*b*) *Eos viciniata*—I had a specimen over three years ago.—R. P.

My next class was the Greys. Here I had but five birds before me—506 was absent. The 1st prize was won by Mrs. Peacock, with a fine bird in irreproachable condition and bloom. I know something of Grey Parrots, and I have never seen one better shown, perhaps never so well. Had Mrs. Peacock been a member of the League, she would have taken the prize for the best-conditioned Parrot in the Show. It was entered as a cock: it has the build of a hen.

Amazons—my next class—naturally provide more variety. There were seven birds before me, one was absent. First went to 513—a Festive belonging to Mr. Maxwell, which was very well shown: 2nd to an *inornata* of Mr. H. B. Smith; 3rd to one entered as “Spectacled.” “Spectacled,” Russ gives as a term for the White-browed. This bird almost looked to me like a young *xantholara*; 4th to a well-shown *ochrocephala*. The remaining birds were Blue-fronted, and were not in specially good plumage.

Class 43, for *Eclectus* Parrots, was poor; there was only one well shown. The only remarks I have to make are that all four birds were cocks, and the second prize belonged to a smaller species.

Perhaps my most interesting class was 44: here I had nine entries and no absentees. I was rather doubtful between the Meyer and the Bronze-wing for first place. But the Bronze-wing did not show himself well, owing to his cage, and so I gave it to the Meyer. The Bronze-wing, who a little later pulled himself together, was good enough for 1st. The Hawk-head to which I gave 3rd, was in brilliant health, but not quite through his moult; had he been, I will not say he might not have been first. A *lineolatus*, for the same reason—that he was not through his moult—got only H. C. There were three, of what I put down as *menstruus*. Two of these may have been in immature plumage, or they may have been of some species of *Pionus* unknown to me; they were in poor plumage (*c*).

I now come to Macaws—here there were five. First went to Mr. Fulljames’ Hyacinthine, beautifully shown; 2nd to a Crimson and Green of Mr. Smith’s, too much hidden by its cage; 3rd was a Blue and Yellow, and 4th an Illiger’s. There was also Mr. Fulljames’ Spix, the rarest bird in my classes—but in such indifferent plumage I could not even give it a card.

Class 46, for Lemon-crested Cockatoos, was cancelled, and with Class 47, for Salmon-crests, Leadbeaters, etc., my labours

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(*c*) Mr. Fulljames showed a *Pionus senilis*, but when I was judging it looked rather rough.—F. G. D.



came to an end. Here, there were several Leadbeaters beautifully shown, as, indeed, was 538, a Salmon-crest. I gave 1st to a pair of Leadbeaters, because it is, as I say, more creditable to show a pair than one. But it is really no easy task to show a Salmon-crest with the spotless purity of Mr. Jacob's bird. Third went to Mr. Maxwell's well-shown hen Ganga. It is possible, however, to get Gangas into still better condition, and that kept her lower than she would have otherwise been. Mr. Fulljames showed a pair, but they were not in very good bloom. Mr. Housden's two Leadbeaters were two cocks. In pen 539 there were a pair of Leadbeaters which I very highly commended, which were peculiar for the hen being richest in colour.

The Specials, that had to be judged by Mr. Camps and myself, were two : one for the rarest bird, and one for the best-conditioned one, belonging to members of the League. Mrs. Peacock's Grey would have won the latter, but she is not a member of the League ; after that, it was a toss-up between Mr. Fulljames' pair of Leadbeaters and his Crimson-wing—the prize fell to the pair. My rarest bird was Mr. Fulljames' Spix Macaw ; but his Princess of Wales Parrakeet, Mr. Maxwell's Golden-shouldered, and Mr. Cocksedge's Red-mantled Parrakeets were all as rare, and in infinitely better condition. So I felt my classes must resign that prize. Where were the "Unicolors" Mr. Fulljames showed me at Brooklyn ? (*d*) But a prize for the rarest bird is rather difficult to award. As far as I know Spix's Macaw, the Princess of Wales Parrakeet, the Red-mantled Parrakeet, and the Golden-shouldered are all one as rare as the other.

Again, what is meant by the rarest ? The one of which there are fewest specimens in the world ? Who can tell that ? Or the one that comes least often into the bird-market ? But one year that is one, another another. Three years ago I would have given it to the Ganga Cockatoo ; now that is comparatively often seen. Perhaps Paradise Parrakeets, which at one time could be easily bought, would win that prize to-day. However, I must close, leaving my questions for others to answer.

F. G. DUTTON.

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### FOREIGN FINCHES.

The classification appeared to me extremely liberal, the arrangement of the classes was good, and a series of notes, giving detailed instructions as to entering birds in their proper classes, made it practically impossible for any exhibitor to enter his birds

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(*d*) Dead, I have since heard. F. G. D.



wrongly. Moreover, very special inducements were held out to those aviculturists who are unable to keep rare and costly birds, by providing a number of classes limited to the common and cheap species. Now we hear a *great* many complaints about the impossibility of the smaller aviculturists competing with the owners of big and costly collections, and about the iniquity of the latter in "sweeping the board" at all the Shows: here was an opportunity for the grumblers—special classes for the common Waxbills, the common Grassfinches and the Mannikins, and prize money equal to that offered in the classes for rare birds. What was the result? In each of these classes the number of entries was very small, and the birds by no means equal in condition to those exhibited in the classes for rare birds. It seems unlikely that the Committee will consider it worth their while to provide these classes at any future Show.

In Class 49 (Weavers and Whydahs) the most striking exhibit was a large cage containing a flock of Paradise Whydahs, all male birds in full breeding plumage. Such a spectacle alone was well worth a journey to the Palace. The most uncommon bird in the class (and probably in the Show) was No. 566, named by the owner, Mr. Fulljames, a "Long-tailed Combasou," and which might be described as a Combasou with a tail of a Whydah, but the beak was black, not yellow like that of a Combasou. There were several excellent Paradise Whydahs, only one of which (No. 569) was accompanied by a female. A pair of birds, where the sexes differ, makes a far more interesting and valuable exhibit than a single bird. There were several Pintailed Whydahs, most of which were exceedingly timid and wild; while all their brethren of the Paradise species were steady and placid. A rare Weaver, sent by Mr. Swaysland, was, I think, a specimen of the Yellowish Weaver. A *Chera procne*, sent by Mr. Housden, was in poor condition. Two of the rare Crimson-banded or Cut-throat Whydahs were exhibited, neither of which was in first-rate trim. There were some good Orange, Oryx, Crimson-crowned and Madagascar Weavers, and a very nice pair of Combasous.

Class 50 was one of the disappointments: it was limited to the commoner Waxbills and had only eight entries, one of which was absent. No. 574 was a nice brightly-coloured pair of Zebra Waxbills, and 580 a good pair of Orange-cheeks. There was one entry of St. Helenas (which appeared to be both cocks), one Avadavat, and no Grey Waxbills.

Class 51 was splendid. Three specimens of the Red-faced Finch (*Pytelia afra*), a male and two females, were contributed

by Mr. L. W. Hawkins, and each was exhibited separately. It seems almost a pity that a pair should not have been exhibited together: however, by separating them the owner gained three awards instead of two. A very lovely female Violet-eared Waxbill, in the most exquisite condition, was sent by Mr. Maxwell, and a fine pair of the same species, by Mr. Fulljames; but the latter were, unfortunately, moulting. There were several very good Crimson Finches, one of which, sent by Mr. Maxwell, was decidedly brighter than the others. Two good Rufous-tails were contributed by Mr. Maxwell and Mr. H. B. Smith. There were several excellent pairs of Cordon-bleus, the best of which belonged to Mr. Fulljames. The Sydney Waxbills were poor. Mr. Smith's Crimson-winged Waxbill was good: why is it that one hardly ever sees a hen of this species? A Green Avadavat (593) seemed to have sustained some injury on its journey.

Class 52.—Gouldians and Parrot Finches; 13 entries, and all good. Mr. Maxwell's Black-headed Gouldian (615) excelled in the brilliancy of his hues and the satiny polish of his plumage, and was, moreover, decorated with an exceptionally long pair of pin-feathers in his tail. The same exhibitor sent a grand cock Parrot Finch (614). Why is it that Parrot Finches, which are easy birds to keep in condition, almost always look rough at Shows? A Three-coloured Parrot Finch (612) was an interesting, but not a very pretty, bird.

Class 53.—Another class for common birds, and another disappointment, contained eight entries, including a good pair of Parson Finches, two good Diamond Sparrows, and some moderate Zebra and Ribbon Finches.

Class 54.—Grassfinches and Cuba Finches. This was principally interesting on account of the very beautiful Long-tailed Grassfinches, more elegant in shape than the Parson Finches, which they closely resemble, and with more delicately-shaded tints of grey and brown. Mr. Hawkins' pair (626) were absolutely perfect in condition and plumage, and others were almost as good. The Masked Finches are hardly as pretty. Mr. Maxwell's Bicheno's Finches were also in exquisite plumage. Is it possible to distinguish the sexes of this species by inspection? With all due respect to certain avicultural writers, I do not think it possible to distinguish them *with certainty*—of course, one can make a pretty good guess in some cases. Mr. Fulljames sent a good pair of Cuba Finches, and there were several Red-headed Finches.

Class 55 (Java Sparrows) contained 13 entries. The

White birds were very good ; one always *hopes* that no faulty feathers have come out in washing them. The Greys, as a rule, were less perfect and wilder.

Class 56 (Mannikins), a poor class. Mr. Fulljames sent a rare bird (569) which, unfortunately, looked very ill. Mr. Maxwell sent a fine male specimen of *Munia pectoralis*, to my mind, the only *very* attractive species of Mannikin, except the Bengalese ; the latter are always charming. Mr. Fulljames had a good pair of Pied Mannikins, and Mrs. Spencer a very nice pair of Brown and White Bengalese.

Class 59 was the poorest class of Cardinals I have yet seen at the Palace. Miss Jackson's Green bird, no longer in his first youth, was the best. A pair of Red-crested birds, belonging to Mr. Ball, were good in condition and colour, but very wild, and were in too small a cage. The Dominicans were very wild and in poor condition.

Class 60 (Grosbeaks, Finches, and Buntings) had some very nice and interesting birds. Entries 675 and 677, both belonging to Mrs. Frostick, were birds of two species I had not previously met with, and both, judging from their appearance, were somewhat nearly related to the Serin Finches. No. 676, belonging to the same exhibitor, was a pair of Grey Singing Finches in particularly neat plumage ; for some reason or other, one hardly ever sees a good Grey Singing Finch at a Show. No. 667 was a bright but tailless specimen of *Chrysomitris tristis*, and 668 a good Black-headed Siskin : 666, a moderate pair of Pileated Finches. The remaining birds were a good Nonpareil, a Jacarini Finch, a pair of Saffron, and two pairs of Green Singing Finches.

C. S. SIMPSON.

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#### DOVES AND SOFT-BILLED BIRDS.

Class 48.—Mr. J. B. Housden's Green Nicobar Pigeons were placed first (with special) as they have been before ; his other pair being second. Beautiful birds in themselves, but clumsy when confined in a Parrot's cage, and under such circumstances decidedly handicapped. Mr. D. Seth-Smith's Jungle Bush Quails (3rd) were pretty, but very timid. The Diamond and Zebra Doves, as well as the Necklaced Turtle Doves, were all pleasing to the eye. But this class was poorly represented.

Class 61.—A very good class, and a difficult one to award individual prizes to. Mr. Fulljames carried off the first three

prizes and a special. Some may consider that the first and special prizes would have been better awarded to the rare Blue and Black Tanager, rather than to the Tricoloured. But they were all beautiful, and perhaps all worthy of the first honours, though unfortunately unable to win them. One or two of the Scarlet Tanagers were in good plumage, especially that which won 4th, being extremely well shown in a cage with a brilliant green background (Mrs. Frostick's good taste).

Mr. Phillips' Superb Tanager was in glorious colour, and only deprived of greater honours than V.H.C. by the fact of his meeting with rarer cousins in competition.

Class 64.—Amongst Starlings, Mynahs, 'Troupials, etc., Mrs. H. C. in Thurn took 1st with a very tame and pretty Yellow and Black Troupial. Mr. H. J. Fulljames' Audaman and Black-headed Starlings were in lovely condition and well shown. A commendation was given to a healthy pair of apparently juvenile Rose-coloured Pastors (Mr. J. B. Housden's) (*e*). It was evident that the *filthy* condition of the cage in which a Long-tailed Glossy Starling was confined shut the latter off from a chance of being favourably noticed. It was a pity that Mr. H. B. Smith's Purple-headed Glossy Starling was somewhat in the middle of its moult.

Class 65.—A miscellaneous collection, in which were two or three very interesting birds. Mr. C. P. Arthur's Green-billed Toucan (a previous winner of 37 first prizes and 34 specials) added yet one more of each to his list of triumphs. Mr. Fulljames' Pink-crested Touraco (2nd) was a most beautiful bird, and debarred from conquering the aforementioned Toucan by his misfortune in having a malformed foot, owing to some accident. A very well-conditioned Shama, tame and freshly moulted, won 3rd (Mr. A. Jones'). Other birds noticed by the Judge were a lovely Yellow-tufted Honey-eater (Mr. C. T. Maxwell's); an Orange-breasted Toucan, very timid (Mr. Geo. Jacob's); and a splendid Tui (Mrs. Frostick's). Nor must I pass over Mr. Fulljames' Blue-cheeked Barbet, which won 4th (in fine condition). Mrs. Frostick's Grey Honey-eaters (H.C.) were, apparently, moulting, though not to such an extent as to disfigure them, and they had a good roomy cage.

HUBERT D. ASTLEY.

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(*e*) These were in moult, at which season the salmon tint becomes clouded; previous to their moult they were in full adult colour.—A, G. B.



## CORRESPONDENCE.

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### IMPOSSIBLE MULES.

SIR,—It has been asserted with great vehemence by certain aviculturists that certain hybrids are impossible. Among those especially cited are (curiously enough) crosses between the two nearly related genera *Serinus* and *Sycalis*.

In one of my aviaries I breed a good many examples of the Saffron Finch, and, early in the present year, I had all my breeding Canaries in the same aviary. Before these were removed one or two of them were observed singing vociferously to hen Saffron-finches. The young of the latter have now moulted and during the process two of them died, but a third (although it walks like its mother) has none of the saffron tinting of *S. flaveola*, whilst the flights are largely coloured with Canary yellow. This bird is a little shorter than typical Saffron-finches; and I have no doubt that it is a genuine hybrid, produced without intention on my part.

A. G. BUTLER.

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### PARROT FINCHES.

SIR,—I hope Mr. Phillipps has satisfied himself that he has successfully reared some young Parrot Finches this Summer: but I cannot quite understand how there can be any chance of confusing the young and adults of this species. The young at first are of a very dull green on the upper parts, with the throat, breast and belly of a dingy yellowish brown, and there is not any scarlet visible for the first few weeks after the birds leave the nest.

I started, this Spring, in my garden-aviary (covered portion heated with hot-water pipes) with three Parrot Finches—a pair and an odd female. On April the 20th, on my return from the Continent, I was told that the Parrot Finches had a nest in a box, and that the young had been heard for some time. On the 25th, a young brood was sitting all day at the mouth of the hole, and on the next day three fine young ones had flown and were sitting on the highest perch in the aviary, carefully tended by the parents. They were easily reared on canary seed and millet, the parents always having access to fresh chickweed, shepherd's purse, etc.

On June the 6th I left home. At that time there were slight indications of scarlet on the foreheads and round the angles of the mouths. On my return, on August the 1st, I found that the young had entirely assumed the bright colour of the adult, and, in fact, were only to be distinguished by the superior smartness of their new suits. The old birds went to nest again, but only hatched one young bird, which left the nest prematurely and perished. I have had eggs laid in my aviary before, but, until this Summer, without young being hatched.

While young Parrot Finches are in the nest, and for a week or more after flying, there are to be seen small warts on the edges of the gapes, like small opals or cats'-eyes. Similar bead-like warts are noticeable outside the mouths of young Gouldian Finches, with the addition that, in these, there are conspicuous black spots on the palate, which are seen when the



young are gaping for food. I did not have the opportunity of noticing whether, in the case of young Parrot Finches, these palate-marks exist. I have just been looking at some newly-hatched Gouldian Finches, and, in the semi-darkness of their nest-boxes, these jewel-like beads were very noticeable—in fact, the idea suggests itself whether they are of service in indicating to the parent bird where food has to be placed. Some of our members may have noticed whether similar decorations exist about the mouths of other species building in holes or covered nests.

W. H. ST. QUINTIN.

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SIR,—Referring to Mr. St. Quintin's letter, I had satisfied myself that I, or rather the parents, had successfully reared some young Parrot Finches or I should not have made the statement that appears on page 199. As I stated, I began with four adult birds, and on August 16th I saw five, so that settles the matter. Of these five, two appeared to me to be young birds; on September 11th, I saw a group of six, so I was right on this point also.

My inner aviary is as full of small trees, shrubs, and bushes as it is possible each spring to stock it with, many dying each year; and my luxuriant spring crops of wheat, oats, grass, rape, etc., etc. mostly perish as the summer goes by, on account of the over-crowding. So thick is the foliage that it is exceedingly difficult to get a fair view of the birds, especially of such restless creatures as Parrot Finches, who are all over the place, and who delight before everything else in creeping like mice through the very thickest of the ground vegetation, sometimes the whole flock being completely buried in a patch of long grass, which they honey-comb with field-mouse-like runs: doubtless they are in search of minute insects. In addition to the vegetation, the double wire-netting obstructs the view; and my eyes are no longer young. Moreover, stretching across nearly half the aviary, at about two-thirds from the front, there still stands what was once the "gymnasium;" years ago this was turned into a triangular bird-structure, the favourite haunt of the Mynahs; and now it is covered with Virginia creeper, and, with some elder bushes, completely cuts off from sight the back of the aviary. During the nesting-season, I never intrude into this sanctum, and sometimes lose sight of shy species for weeks.

These two young birds were fairly advanced when first noticed, the throat patch being of considerable size, and of the colour of that of the face of the female Red-faced Love-bird. They also had a good show of dingy red in the rear, the *green, especially of the under parts*, being of a dull, almost blackish, tinge.

I have since thrown open the doors which connect the two parts of the aviary; and now the little birds come right up to the house, but dart off into the thicket if the garden door be opened.

On October 6th, on peeping into the aviary through a window, I found another brood of three, whose squeaks had been heard for some days, on the grass just below me. These were babies indeed, one being scarcely able to fly; but all, like the first lot, had a certain amount of dingy red behind; and they further differed from Mr. St. Quintin's birds in that not one, not one of the whole five in fact, had the dingy yellowish brown extending to the belly or anything like it. Two, who are very independent, have

only a slight wash of yellow on the throat, while the other, who still sticks to its mater (or pater), is wholly green in the front, not a suspicion of yellow being discernible. Probably the former are males and the latter a female. The beaks are whitish yellow. It seems to me that, with the one exception, the young became independent of their parents at a very early age.

These birds, it must be understood, have been bred in the open garden. The parents have access to sop and to the insectivorous food supplied to the Warblers; and they always eagerly avail themselves of any opportunity that may present itself of snapping up a stray mealworm.

I may add that my Parrot Finches certainly prefer nesting in a low, well-sheltered, almost dark, spot, rather than high up in the aviary; and they prefer making "independent" nests to making use of boxes or the like.

On October 20th, I caught and examined two of the last brood. Both were in full moult, and coming rapidly into colour. A supposed male had the under parts dull black-green; but the under parts (not counting the throat) of the supposed female were rather of a yellow-green. The bill of the latter was orange with dark brown tip; the lower mandible of the former was orange and the upper black.

REGINALD PHILLIPPS.

## SWALLOWS IN CAGES.

SIR,—I cannot help making a protest against the confinement of Swallows in cages. One might almost as well try to keep a fish out of water. To see these poor birds fluttering against the bars of a tiny cage at a Bird Show is really heart-rending.

A Swallow is a bird of the air, and settles chiefly on a house-roof or tree for the purpose of rest. Swallows feed on the wing entirely, catching (as everyone knows) the insects in the midst of their graceful and marvellous flight. It must be misery to them to be forced to peck at their food from a tray whilst seated on a perch. Both actions are *utterly* unnatural to them for the purpose of obtaining food.

One of these birds, exhibited at the Crystal Palace on the 4th of October, had so beaten its wings against the bars as to make the shoulders bleed, and the perch on which it tried to balance itself was bespattered with blood.

There are so many birds that can be made happy in cages, that it seems unnecessary (if nothing else) to imprison a bird which nobody can induce me to believe can feel anything but wretched, having within its inmost being a strong instinct to do that which captivity prevents it from accomplishing (*f*).

HUBERT D. ASTLEY.

(*f*) We heartily endorse Mr. ASTLEY's protest. This is a matter which the National British Bird and Mule Club would do well to take in hand. What makes the thing still more cruel is that the birds are all wild-caught, and not, as is often supposed, hand-reared.—ED. and R.P.

## BREEDING OPERATIONS AT MICKLEFIELD IN 1898.

SIR,—Once more I send you a record of the doings of my feathered friends during the present year.

The first to lead off were the Cherry-finches. They built a lovely nest in a box tree, warmly lined with feathers, and, strangely enough, *decorated on the outside* with the same. They laid three good-sized, longish, white eggs; sat the full time, but failed to hatch: why, I do not know. I have had this pair for years out of doors.

I will not trouble to record the doings of such common stuff as Zebra-finches, Silverbills, Ribbon Finches or Avadavats; but there are a lot of youngsters knocking about.

I have already given an account of the nesting of the Pekin Robins; they laid again twice after that—three eggs each time, but I took the nests for the sake of the Virginian Cardinals. I will say no more about these latter here, as I have written a special article on their nesting.

My American Mocking-birds built a beautiful nest, but they did not lay. I quite hope to rear some next year—the second attempt is usually, with me, successful.

My Malabar Mynahs built twice, a regular Starling's nest in a box; they laid about six eggs each time, the same colour as our English Starling but rather smaller and rounder: all were unfertile—I blame the cock.

In Parrakeets I have done fairly well, I think.

I reared three grand young Redrumps, two cocks and a hen (all sold long since—I say this for my own protection).

My Kings laid three eggs (at least the Queen did) and sat well, but they did not hatch. I think the reason was that the cock was a new one and had been in the aviary only about a week when she laid. My Queen must be eight years old, to my knowledge. She lays regularly every year.

My Crimson-wings laid three eggs, *fertile*, but got disturbed. I hope for better luck next time.

My Turquoisines laid eggs, but failed to rear any young.

The success of which I am proudest is the one recorded in last month's Magazine—the rearing of African Firefinches. I believe such an event is quite unique in aviculture, (*g*) as most people can't keep them alive.

I have had eggs from Zebra Waxbills and Cordon Bleus, but no young reared.

Total for the year—*Nests* of Virginian Cardinals, Pekin Robins, Redrumps and African Firefinches, and a lot of common stuff not reckoned.

Good attempts—Malabar Mynahs, Mocking Birds, King's, and Crimson-wings (*h*).

C. D. FARRAR.

(*g*) Mr. WIENER states that "this bird has been bred times innumerable;" while, according to Dr. RUSS, "not one of all the Astrilds nests so easily as this." It is therefore only the fact of its breeding in *Britain* which is (possibly) unique.—ED.

(*h*) We have been obliged to omit some parts of Mr. FARRAR's letter, which appeared likely to give offence.—ED.

## BREEDING AVADAVATS.

SIR.—Your readers may be interested to hear that I have two young Indian Avadavats, which left the nest on the 4th of September. One is very vigorous and feeds itself and bathes freely; the other bird is not quite so forward.

The old birds built a round nest in a fir-branch in my garden-aviary, sat in turn, and both fed from the crop. There were no empty eggs. The young are brown, like the mother, with black beaks.

On reading the foot-note on page 177 of the August number of our Magazine, I removed my already-suspected Pekin Robins from the aviary. Up to that time I had not one young bird, although my birds had been out since May the 2nd, and I know some had laid and sat, including Cordon Bleus. Since the removal of the Pekins I have Zebra Finches, African Silverbills, Avadavats, and three young Cordon Bleus. The feathers were just shewing when I picked up two young Cordon Bleus on the sand, and the next morning the male bird was seen flying about with another in his beak. They are now sitting again.

All my Waxbills partake freely of bread and milk, which I make at the breakfast-table each morning; they also have hard-boiled yolk of egg, mealworms, gentles and wasp-grubs.

GRACE ASHFORD.

## CROSSBILLS.

SIR,—On the 15th of August, when I was staying at Worthing, a dead Crossbill, which had been caught in a trap, was brought to me, and proved to be a young male, showing one or two reddish feathers on the back. I was told at the same time that two more had been caught a few days before by a bird-catcher near the same place, and I subsequently saw one of these in a cage—a remarkably steady, tame bird.

On the 18th of the month, as I was passing some tall fir trees close to the town of Worthing, a Crossbill flew down in front of me, amongst some Sparrows, immediately attracting my attention by its unmistakable note—*chit, chit, chit*—and its tameness; it was quite as tame as the Sparrows and allowed me to approach to within a few feet of it.

Again, on the 23rd of the month, when about a mile from the same place, I heard the note of a Crossbill, and, approaching, saw the bird, perched upon a dead branch some ten feet above my head. This one was also remarkably tame, and allowed me to stand just under it and watch it for quite five minutes before it took flight.

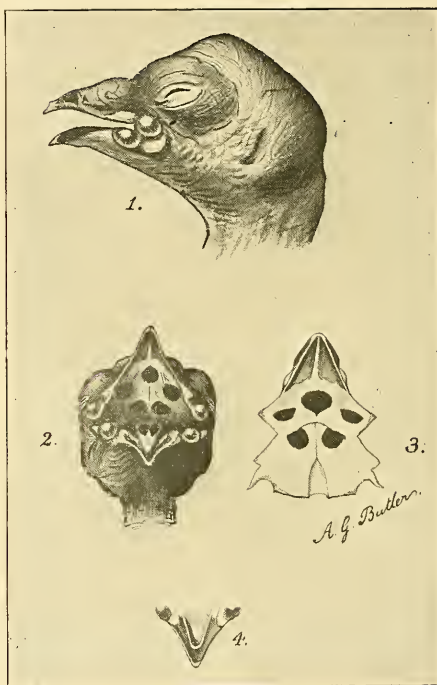
On August the 26th four Crossbills, seen about two miles from Worthing, were flying separately, all in a North-Easterly direction. I had no difficulty in identifying them by their note and flight.

I have neither seen nor heard one since. Those that I saw quite close were young birds, showing little or none of the red plumage.

D. SETH-SMITH.







1. Young Gouldian Finch head in profile, magnified about three times.
2. Ditto being fed: from front, magnified about twice.
3. Palate and upper mandible from another specimen, still more enlarged.
4. Lower mandible with tongue removed to show markings.

THE

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## ON THE ORNAMENTATION OF THE MOUTH IN THE YOUNG GOULDIAN FINCH.

*(Poephila mirabilis).*

By ARTHUR G. BUTLER, Ph.D.

On September 24th I received a box from our member Mr. W. H. St. Quintin, containing four young of the Red-headed variety of the Gouldian Finch, with an expression of his wish that I should describe them for the Magazine.

The birds, as I subsequently learnt, were hatched on the 15th of the month, or possibly a day or two earlier (in a covered nest-box). The mother died on the 6th, but an unattached Black-headed hen undertook incubation jointly with the surviving male parent. The latter died on the 17th, and the Black-headed foster-parent continued to feed the young until the 23rd, when she also died; the nestlings consequently expired from cold on the same day, their crops still containing seed when they reached me.

One of the peculiarities of these squabs is the total nakedness of their bodies, and that too at so advanced an age; but in this respect they do not stand alone in the family *Ploceidæ*, for Dr. Russ comments upon the complete and repulsive bareness of the young of the African Silver-bill. The most interesting feature, however, in this species consists in the striking and peculiar ornamentation of the outside and inside of the mouth, the object of which, as it seemed to me, must be to enable the parents to feed the young in the partial obscurity of the nest; but the suggestion was made, by one to whom I showed the young birds, that should a small snake insert its head into the nest, it would be unable to recognize its prey in nestlings so startlingly ornamented.

The snake theory is a favourite one with the more enthusiastic of modern evolutionists, but I hold to the view that the ornamentation is merely a guide to the open mouth of the infant bird, and in this opinion I am pleased to find that I have the support both of Mr. St. Quintin and Mr. Meade-Waldo.

In a letter dated September 25th, Mr. St. Quintin writes as follows :

“As regards the mouth-ornamentation, in a short paper on the breeding of Parrot-finches, which I have lately sent to Mr. Fillmer, I mentioned that the nestlings of that species have somewhat similar bead-like warts on the mouth (as the Gouldian Finches).

“I found yesterday, in a nest-box, some partly fledged young Cordon-bleus which had died ; these also showed some mouth decoration, but they were not fresh enough to send up to you.

“In that paper I suggested that the iridescent warts and palatal spots might be of service to the parents at feeding-time, in the case of birds breeding in covered nests or in holes. But, on the other hand, I do not know any of the native hole-breeders, or those with domed nests, whose nestlings have any special growths or excrescences ; though some of them breeding in holes, as Tits, and also birds building in the semi-darkness of dense bushes, as Hedge-sparrows and others, have brightly coloured gapes, which may answer the same purpose of indicating where a hungry mouth remains to be filled.

“Mr. Meade-Waldo, who is staying with me, has just bred some Black-headed Gouldian Finches ; and tells me that, in the darkness of a nest-box in the upper part of the aviary under the roof, the six young birds could be easily counted by the gleaming beads on the edges of their mouths, even when nothing else was visible.”

It is asserted by certain evolutionists of the modern school that every type of ornamentation has a definite object and is necessary to the preservation of the species, but I am not convinced of the truth of this assumption ; for I believe that excess of vital energy in any part of an organism may find vent in the production of a monstrous growth, which may not be absolutely necessary, though not injurious : or may only serve the same purpose as a far less remarkable modification.

The swollen and expanded base of the upper mandible in *P. mirabilis* (when first hatched) is dull yellow, but as it

narrows towards the hardened apex it is crossed by a broad blackish belt; the tip is horn-yellow; and the culmen towards the tip bears a little conical prominence which renders the end of the upper mandible obliquely truncate when viewed in profile.

The lower mandible seen from below is horn-yellowish, partly bordered and traversed just before the tip (which is deflexed) by a broad blackish  $\Lambda$ -shaped band.

The most curious part of the mouth - ornamentation consists in the character of what Dr. Russ calls the waxy-glands (the expansions and warts at the posterior edge of the upper mandible and at the back of the opening). The lateral expansion is indeed not remarkable, being less developed than in many species and of a pale milky yellowish tint; but at the back of the mouth are three prominent rounded tubercles in the form of a triangle, two at the base of the mandibles of a bright and almost metallic glistening opaline blue and one behind these of a pale yellow tint.

The inside of the mouth is either ivory-white or flesh-pink, the palate conspicuously marked (like a domino) with five more or less round black spots in pentagonal form; one in front, two wide apart in the centre, and two near together at the back; and, in front of each of the four posterior ones, an oblique rosy longitudinal streak (probably arteries, and owing their colour to blood); the inside of the upper mandible is marked by a broad  $\Lambda$ -like band each ramus of which is pterygoid; very broad beyond the middle, then abruptly narrowed and tapering to a point.

The tongue is crossed just in front of its centre by a broad belt, or by two large pear-shaped black spots, with apex directed forward. The lower mandible is bordered inside with black, and behind this border is a submarginal black V-shaped band. Altogether the ornamentation of the mouth in this young bird is very remarkable.

My son and I have carefully examined the metallic tubercles under the microscope and find that they are filled with dark brown pigment, the iridescent colouring being produced, as I anticipated, by fine reticulation of the outer surface: this reticulation is clearly discernible under a high power. A transverse section shows the metallic gloss on the convex face of the tubercle with the mass of brown pigment behind it.

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## BREEDING REDRUMPS.

*Observations and Little Difficulties.*

By A. SAVAGE.

I had some peculiar experiences last season with my pair of Redrumps, and relating them may interest the readers of the *Avicultural Magazine*. The pair I refer to is the old pair, now in my possession over three years, in their (about) half a cubic mètre box-cage, and which have reared so many young—thirty-one—all disposed of, except one that escaped. They have hatched in all thirty-four, but three died this season quite young, as will be seen further on. I must admit that the cock is not altogether an exemplary father when the young leave the nest, and, had I not kept an eye on him, many of them (cocks especially) he would surely have killed on leaving it, days before they could feed themselves. His conduct in this respect is probably due to their being in rather close quarters: the young not being able to get far enough out of his way, and the parents being very regular and quick breeders. For the last three years they have had three nests each year, and *each year* the eggs were laid at the commencement of March, May, and July, as regular as clockwork, almost to the day, and never a week's difference in the dates. Every year I have noticed the cock's impatience to get his youngsters off his hands just when the hen was about to lay again, but formerly it was mostly with the second and third nests—the second especially—but this year he commenced maltreating the young of the first nest, and days before they could feed themselves. I caught him in the act one morning, and, just as he was doing his best to throttle one poor little one, gave him a good "spanking" with my handkerchief, which frightened and stopped him for an hour or so; but he began operating on them again in the afternoon, and I had to take him away and cage him alone. I was rather loth to do so, as I could see the hen was coming on to lay, but I acted on the "bird in the hand" proverb, and out he came! For the rest of the day quiet was restored, and the hen spent her time in looking after and feeding her frightened and half-beaten-to-death youngsters.

The next day she laid the first egg of her second nest, which eventually consisted of five eggs, and continued feeding her first little ones while laying this clutch. Everything went well during the time she was sitting, the cock bird being close at hand but out of sight, in his prison-cage, making a big fuss and noise; and during her sitting process the first young learned to



feed themselves. Although the cock was taken away before she laid, I rather expected one or two of the first eggs of the clutch might be good, and determined to let her sit out to try the experiment; but I must say I was surprised to find, eventually, that *all the eggs were good and everyone hatched!* Another interesting point then remained to be seen—could she rear five young birds alone? The first day or two she was more than busy chasing youngsters No. 1 out of her way and feeding babies No. 2; to give her a chance, I removed No. 1, who were then quite capable of looking after themselves, so that she could give all her attention to No. 2 little ones. The task was too much for her, and they began to die. She might, perhaps, have reared one or two alone, but five were too many.

When young Parrakeets are being reared under ordinary circumstances, the hen is rarely seen out of the nest for the first five days or a week: the cock usually goes to the nest to feed her, with food probably in a partly digested state, and she passes it on to the young ones. I am of opinion that the first week of a young Parrakeet's life is its most critical stage, and it is at that time the cock's assistance in feeding is the most needed.

The brave little hen stuck to her task of rearing alone, though it was clearly above her capacity, and she seemed in a trembling state of exhaustion from it. This, of course, could not be allowed to continue; losing a hen of her value would never do; and the putting back of the cock (after two of the young had died, while another looked very weak) was the only chance of saving her and them. As he had never seen the eggs, much less the young, I did not know how he would take it. On his introduction there was a good deal of "chattering and wing-shaking," during which, I suppose, the hen assured him the youngsters were really his and his alone. Their behaviour was interesting and curious to observe, and he, after several cautious peeps, darted into the nest, came out again, and commenced feeding with his gallant little partner. I knew then all was well. The young were fed afterwards by both parents, and the "hungry cry" they seemed to utter before the cock was put back, ceased. The weak one referred to died a day or two later, being too far gone to profit by the cock's extra feeding; but the other two were eventually reared, and turned out cocks. All went well till they were nearly ready to leave the nest, when the old cock nearly killed them, and this time *before they left it*. The same reason again—the hen about commencing to lay another clutch, and the cock wanting the youngsters out of the way.

I may mention here that there are two nest-boxes at the hen's disposal, so it is not for the want of nesting accommodation that the cock acts as he does towards his offspring. He was, of course, caged up again, and the hen left to nurse and look after her two sons: and they really wanted all the care she could bestow upon them. They made fine progress; but more trouble was in store for them, for within a week the hen laid again. We were then with two young birds scarcely able to nibble seed or even green food; and the mother laying without the cock—taken away a week previously. What was to be done? I did not want her to lay and sit on unfertile eggs, as it was more than probable they would be, the cock having been removed before she was in laying condition; and on the other hand, I did not care to sacrifice ("bird in the hand" proverb again) the two young cocks for eggs that might not hatch. However, as the hen was continually uttering her "pairing-cry," and the cock answering with his pretty little song, never so frequently heard as in the breeding season, I determined to take the two young ones away, and assist them as much as I could in feeding themselves—by giving them plenty of chickweed in seed, tender to nibble with their slender beaks, and bruising their seed a little—and to put the cock back with his mate again. She had then laid two eggs, which I marked; stopped laying for two or three days; then laid three more, and commenced sitting. With the above food the two young cocks did very well, and in a week were quite saved. The five eggs the hen was incubating gave the following result—Two (those marked) clear, and the other three all hatched. The young are just now about to leave the nest, and are one cock and two hens.

The object of these few notes is to mention the fertilizing of Parrakeets' eggs: to induce amateurs to give the eggs a trial should they ever be placed in the same position as I was, and not throw them away immediately as "sure to be barren," just because the cock was not with the hen till the last moment before she commenced laying. I believe there is a great difference between the fertilizing of Parrakeets' eggs and Fowls' eggs. On this subject one well known writer says: "The pairings of Parrakeets are repeated and long, frequent pairings being necessary to fertilize the eggs; quite the opposite to fowls, where the cock, in one operation, fertilizes a whole batch of eggs." With these remarks, from a reliable source, in mind, I was rather doubtful of the fertility of the two or three *last* eggs of the first clutch of five mentioned; but it is evident the necessary amount of pairing had taken place, for all hatched.

With the second clutch it was the contrary, the cock had to be taken away too soon, hence the first two eggs were clear; and had he not been put back to the hen when he was, the last three would probably have been clear also. I presume from the preceding that when a sufficient amount of pairing has taken place, the fertilizing extends to the end of the clutch, and I think *at least* eight days must have elapsed from the time the cock was taken away from the hen till she laid the fifth egg of those all fertile. Her failing to bring up the young, alone, tends to prove the necessity of the cock's assistance when the family is numerous and of a tender age.

Apart from the pleasing song of the cock, Redrumps have several other notes, each having a different meaning, and some of which are the following :

1st.—The “fright-note”—a piercing shrill note both birds utter when frightened.

2nd.—The “pairing-note”—a low wheezing sound heard from the hen only, and a sure sign she is coming on to lay.

3rd.—The “excitement-note”—a chattering note both give, accompanied by the wings being thrown forward and shaken, when the birds are in a state of excitement and are discussing family matters between themselves.

4th.—The “bad-temper note”—an unwelcome sound—a cackling noise made mostly by the cock, which indicates his vicious state of feeling towards his youngsters, and precedes the maltreatment they will surely get after it.

By observing these few notes, anyone who has had a little experience with these handsome and interesting Parakeets may know what is going on in their aviary and between themselves, although yards away and out of sight.

A little care and watching is, nevertheless, advisable, to ensure success in their breeding, for, as is the case with other birds (and sometimes human beings, too) they are at times prone to leave undone things they ought to do and to do things they ought not to do, and then failure is likely to ensue. An open eye, and matters put right in time, will save many a nestling.

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# THE TAIL OF THE INDIAN SHÂMA.

(*Cittocincla tricolor*).

By REGINALD PHILLIPPS.

In our Magazine for February, 1898, the Rev. H. D. Astley gave us an interesting account of the Shâma; and in his description as well as his illustration of the bird he represented the outer tail-feathers as being white. In a foot-note at page 68 I ventured to point out that, if these side feathers in Mr. Astley's bird are wholly white, it would seem to be a specimen of *C. suavis* rather than *C. tricolor*.

A few months later, through the courtesy of Dr. Greene, I became possessed of the body of a fine Shâma 11½ inches long; and I think the details of the colouring of the several feathers of the tail—a tail of the typical Indian Shâma—might with advantage be recorded in our pages.

The two central feathers were 6¾ inches long, and were wholly black.

The next feather, on each side, was 5¾ inches long, and likewise wholly black.

Of the next, 4¾ inches long, measuring at the edges of the feather—nearly the whole of the inner and 3¼ inches of the outer web were black. In each feather, the line of demarcation between the black and the white is drawn in an irregular slanting direction, but in some much more so than in others. It is the basal end that is black; and in most of these feathers the black runs up the shaft beyond the line.

The fourth feather from the centre was 4 inches long, the black extending from the base 2¾ inches on the inner web and 2¼ inches on the outer.

Up No. 5, which was 3¼ inches long, the black extended 2½ inches and 2 inches respectively.

The outer feather, on each side, was 2½ inches long, of which the black claimed 1½ inches of the inner and 1¼ inches of the outer web.

Doubtless the measurements will differ somewhat in different specimens; even the corresponding feathers in this tail did not agree in every case; nevertheless these particulars relatively agree with a smaller tail which I have had by me for some years.

The immediate cause of the death of this noble bird, which had lived with its owner in this country about four years



I was informed, was an apoplectic seizure brought on by over exertion or excitement whilst singing ; but the actual cause of the mischief was too generous living during the pairing season.

## THE SONGS OF TANAGERS.

By W. NICHOLSON.

The Scarlet Tanager in my possession was purchased when quite a young bird, and had not then attained his adult plumage. Whilst in this state, I never heard him utter anything except the familiar cry of "tak," which he only repeated when I went near his cage or was feeding him. At the end of last summer, after he had moulted and assumed his scarlet and black plumage, he seemed to become more lively ; and one day I heard a peculiar song, but was not sure which of my birds was the author of it, until I had a peep into the bird-room and found it was the Scarlet Tanager, which I had previously thought to be a dummy as regards song. Certainly the song does not approach that of the Thrush, although I am inclined to think the Scarlet Tanager has pilfered a note or two of *his*. The song is, as near as I can render it : *Chip, chip, cheery ; chip, chip, cheery ; bo-peep, bo-peep ; chirat, chirat ; cheo, cheo ; teeswit, teeswit, teeswit, teeswit ; whizee, whizee, whizee*. This he repeats over and over again, particularly in the morning after he has had a feed, and at night before going to roost. Since he began he has improved a good deal, and his voice has become more subdued and the notes more distinct ; but he has some good tutors, such as a Calandra Lark, Blackcap, Shâma, and Thrush, besides a miscellaneous collection of finches.

The Superb Tanager has always been fond of repeating his sharp chirp, and uttering a few harsh notes very similar to those of the Shâma, when the latter becomes excited ; but only occasionally have I heard him utter a few sweeter notes, not of any long duration, and similar to that of the Indigo Bunting, as Dr. Butler describes it.

The Violet Tanager has a pretty little song, and is fond of repeating it somewhat after the style of an Avadavat ; but still he occupies a back seat as compared with his companion. Unfortunately I cannot make his companion out ; I think he is either *Euphonia gracilis* or *Chlorophonia viridis*, but I am not sure : at any rate he is the champion. On the morning of his arrival, directly I took him out of his travelling cage and put him into his permanent home, he commenced with his call-note, which is



so identical with the Robin's note that my Robin answered him immediately, and now they frequently call to each other.

After he had been in my possession a week he began to sing a very pretty melody, which I can only compare to the Robin's, but the notes are more connected and of longer duration. He is very fond of singing, and is at it incessantly from morning till night; in fact, he will sit on his food-dish and utter a few notes between the mouthfuls of food, and may be heard singing away when all his neighbours are having their afternoon snooze, and long after they have retired for the night.

I have also amongst my collection the Blue and Black, Striated, Crowned, and Chestnut-backed Tanagers; but have not had them long enough to allow me to speak about their vocal abilities.

Since writing the foregoing my Crowned Tanager has shown a little inclination to tune up. Yesterday (October 12th), when all his neighbours were having a rehearsal, he commenced to give a song very similar to that of a Starling, and flapped his wings in the same manner, at the same time doing a sort of dance like the Bengalese, but at each bow he tapped the perch with his beak. He did not sing very long—but then, he is not in good plumage and minus his tail, therefore he may do better later on.

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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### RED-HEADED FINCH.

SIR,—It may perhaps interest some of our members to hear that I have bred three hybrids from a cock Red-headed Finch and a hen Ribbon Finch. The young birds are two cocks and one hen, and were bred in an outdoor aviary without my knowledge, so that I was much surprised by their sudden appearance on September the 1st. The two males show their hybrid origin very distinctly, having the band of the male Ribbon Finch and also red (which is apparently increasing) on the head; the throat-band is also of the brick-red shade shown on the head of their male parent, not the more purple shade of the pure Ribbon Finch. I found, on searching for the nest, that the parents had driven out a pair of Zebra Finches from a box on a pole in the aviary, and built their own nest on the top of the Zebra Finches' nest—which latter contained five eggs.

I have owned the Red-head cock four years; and one mate of his own species and three or four Ribbon Finch wives, that have been supplied to him in succession, have all died egg-bound.

I moved to my present residence this Spring, so that my birds were not turned into their present aviary until quite the end of June; since then Saffron Finches, Parson Finches, Zebra Finches, Bengalese (two pairs) and this cross-mated pair have all bred in the aviary; and I have now a pair of

Ribbon Finches and a pair of Dwarf Finches sitting, besides, possibly, some others, as there is a thick hedge in the aviary. The Saffron Finches lost their young, and are, I think, breeding again. The other birds reared broods.

E. D. H. DALY.

### NESTING OF THE DIAMOND DOVE.

SIR,—A pair of Diamond Doves in my aviary have, this year, successfully reared two pairs of young birds, a fact that is perhaps worth recording in our columns, since the species has not very frequently been reared in English aviaries.

In the early part of the year, I had two pairs of Diamond Doves in an indoor aviary, and I found the hens very subject to egg-binding, in fact one of them succumbed to this complaint in April. In May, a pair was put into a garden aviary, where they soon commenced to build. They would not look at any artificial nesting-receptacles, but preferred to build as Nature had taught them—amongst the natural branches. The nest was composed entirely of stiff pieces of grass; it was very small—about two inches in diameter—but well made and strong. The eggs were hatched in about twelve days, and the young grew very rapidly; in fact they were sitting outside the nest when they were a fortnight old, and in less than three weeks from the time they hatched were able to fly as well as their parents (*a*).

The old birds went to nest again very soon after the young could fly, but they continued to feed the latter until they were quite able to look after themselves.

Young Diamond Doves are at first barred with brown, and have none of the white wing-spots; these, however, begin to appear when the birds are about a month old. The bright red skin round the eye is not developed until they are six or eight weeks old, when they are practically indistinguishable from their parents.

I think it is advisable to separate the sexes during the winter months and keep them out of *hearing* of one another, or else, even if the temperature be kept fairly high, the hens are apt to become egg-bound and die in the early spring.

I think it is improbable that Diamond Doves would breed successfully in an indoor aviary unless it were of a considerable size; few birds, in my opinion, do half so well indoors as out, in the summer.

Diamond Doves are, to my mind, the most charming of foreign Doves: they are hardy, very beautiful, of a decidedly cheerful disposition, and, if suitably housed, are free breeders in captivity.

D. SETH-SMITH.

### THE MADAGASCAR WEAVER.

SIR,—I should be glad to know the experience of any members of the Avicultural Society in keeping the Madagascar Weaver (*Foudia madagascariensis*) with Waxbills and other small birds. Is he a safe or a dangerous bird? I should like to know their observations of his character, both in

(*a*) A third pair were hatched on October 9th, but the parents discontinued feeding them when the weather became chilly, and they lived only sixteen days.—D. S.-S.

cage and aviary—for I believe that many birds, which will maltreat others in small quarters, will not do so when they have ample room.

Last winter I tried two of these Weavers, newly-imported, in a fair-sized cage with a pair of Nonpareils and a favourite old Gouldian Finch, but had to remove them for persistent bullying. This summer I have a large new outdoor aviary—the summer residence of my Waxbills and small Finches. The Weaver (for only one survives) is in splendid feather; and his agile movements and flashing colour would be a great addition to the beauty of the tribe in the aviary, but I have never dared to turn him among them. Against another year, I should like to know the risk of doing so.

O. E. CRESSWELL.

### DRIED FLIES.

Some weeks ago I purchased a 5/- bag of "Zeke," in the hope and belief that I had obtained a valuable addition to my birds' larder. Considerably to my surprise, I find that none of my birds will touch the dried flies when unmixed with other food, and that although they appear to be eaten when stirred into a mixture of sponge-cake, ants' eggs, and preserved egg, the food seems to be less readily eaten than when it does not contain flies. I have offered the flies to the following birds—Bulbuls (three species), Superb Tanager, Zosterops, Sugar-bird, Nightingale, Wheatear, Whinchat, Blackcap, Garden Warbler, and Lesser Whitethroat—with the result that none of them will eat them, except, as it were by accident, when mixed with other food.

I should be glad to know whether other aviculturists have had a similar experience, or whether I must consider my birds exceptionally dainty.

I find that "Zeke" contains a large proportion of dust and rubbish, and requires to be well sifted before use. It does not keep so well as ants' eggs, as a sort of mould rapidly forms on the outside of the bag.

I hardly think that "Zeke" is as much of a novelty as it is represented to be. I bought some dried flies in 1895 which had the same "ancient and fish-like smell," and must, I think, have been obtained from the same source (*b*).

HORATIO R. FILLMER.

### SWALLOWS IN CAGES.

SIR,—I am glad to see Mr. Astley's protest against keeping Swallows in cages. I have long thought of making the same protest myself. I do not think anyone who keeps a Swallow in a cage can really care about birds.

F. G. DUTTON.

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(*b*) As a rule I have mixed 'Zeke' with my soft food and have found it all eaten by Pileated and English Jays, Blackbird, Bluebird, Thrush, Crested Mynah, Nuthatch, Liothrix, Madeiran Chaffinch, and all kinds of Weavers. Unmixed it has been eaten dry by Pileated and English Jays, Nightingale, Bluebird, Liothrix, Superb Tanager (which however is not a great insect-eater), Scarlet Tanager, and Crested Mynah. It should be kept in tins, when it keeps well. All dried insects crumble by friction and thus produce insect-dust, but this is not unwholesome. 'Zeke' has been imported in small consignments for six or seven years.—A. G. B.

SIR,—I am so glad to see the protest in the *Avicultural Magazine* against keeping Swallows in cages. It seems a very needless cruelty. An imprisoned Lark is also a sad sight, in my opinion. I should like to see our Society set its face against the confinement of birds so unsuited to cage life.

E. E. WEST.

SIR,—Allow me to support, very earnestly, Mr. Astley's reprobation of caged Swallows.

THOS. TURNER.

### SOME FALLACIES.

SIR,—(1). We are commonly told by our "guides" that Australian Crimson Finches are the most dangerous of birds; that to put them into an aviary with other birds means, for the latter, murder and sudden death. I can assure our gentle readers, from a large and long experience, that this is not so. Crimson Finches behave in a most exemplary manner in a mixed collection. I have a pair at the present moment in one of my large aviaries, and they behave admirably. Again, we are told that the male Crimson Finch always makes it a point of honour to slay his wife as speedily as possible. I again assert that this is arrant nonsense. I have had many pairs, and they never offered to fight. I have a pair now, and they are like Queen Elizabeth and Leicester, "When you see one the other is not far away." I can only suppose that in the solitary case where a Crimson Finch murdered his wife, he was feeling desperately ill; and this solitary case has been quoted by subsequent authorities as the normal state of things. Likely enough, I shall be told that my Crimson Finches are the exception which prove the rule; but all I can say is that I have had many exceptions.

(2). Dr. Butler made the astounding statement in the *Feathered World*, that Common Waxbills are so delicate that he cannot keep them alive. Why, I should say that there is no hardier bird imported. I have had my present pair for years. I don't think you could kill them by fair means—I couldn't. I don't say what Dr. Butler could do.

(3). "Paddy rice is essential to keep Pintailed Nonpareils alive," is another wise saw we are asked to believe. My Pintails never see paddy rice, and they are in perfect health and condition. I never find any difficulty in keeping them; nor does my friend Mr. Oates, of Leeds—I suppose, again, we are "exceptions."

(4). Once more—"The proper food for Tanagers." We have had the greater part of some numbers of our Magazine devoted to this question. Wondrous diets are recommended—no wonder the Tanagers refused to live. One gentleman talked about the ripe bananas of Periambuco. Well, my Tanagers do very well on bananas out of Leeds Market, and are thankful for them. I will undertake to keep a Tanager with the greatest ease on banana and Abrahams' egg and boiled rice for any reasonable time. I have Superb and Violet Tanagers, and I had Reds, but I sold them as they were such murderous wretches—(but that is another story). So far from Tanagers being delicate, I know of two friends who have, at the present moment, Superb and Violet Tanagers in outdoor aviaries (October 17th). Of course, any bird will die if you do not feed it properly, even a Tanager! (c)

C. D. FARRAR.

(c) We have again been compelled to excise a small portion of Mr. Farrar's letter, which was calculated to hurt the feelings of a highly esteemed member.—ED.



In the foregoing letter, as in previous communications, the Rev. C. D. Farrar assumes that where his observations differ from those of other writers one or the other must be wrong. This is an entirely unnecessary assumption, as all aviculturists know how widely the experience of two observers may differ as to the habits and character of the same species. For instance, Dr. Butler found the Parson Finch intolerably spiteful in his aviaries—I have kept that bird for years in mine without mishap, and have had many young ones in a small aviary filled with defenceless species. Yet neither Dr. Butler nor I doubt the correctness of the other's observations.

It is a pity that Mr. Farrar will persist in thus assuming that differing observations are necessarily contradictory, but unfortunately he is not satisfied with that but goes a step further, and claims, as a matter of course, that when he differs from others he alone is right and the statements of others untrue. By taking up this position he prejudices many against his views, needlessly irritates his opponents, and renders it difficult to conduct a friendly discussion with him. I feel bound to remind him that writers in this Magazine are expected to express themselves courteously and with consideration for others, and that its columns will not be allowed to become an arena for ill-mannered controversies.

After this introduction I will reply to Mr. Farrar's "Fallacies" *seriatim*.

(1). Like other birds, Crimson Finches doubtless differ greatly in disposition, yet most observers find them very dangerous to other birds. Mr. Wiener says, "In the aviary the Crimson Finch is one of the most combative of small birds, especially at breeding-time." (Cassell's "Canaries and Cage Birds," p. 370). Dr. Russ says, "A male in my bird-room was sociable, yet at times spiteful towards small birds." (Butler's "Foreign Finches in Captivity," p. 147). Dr. Simpson, quoted by Dr. Butler, says, "I know of no small birds which equal these for spitefulness," and Dr. Butler adds, "Mr. Abraham gives them the same character." My own pair were so spiteful that neither could be trusted with other birds, and one day the cock attacked the hen and nearly killed her. On the other hand, Mr. Todd found the species peaceable (*Avicultural Magazine*, Vol. iv., p. 5). I think the evidence in favour of its dangerous nature so greatly predominates that it is the duty of a writer on aviculture (even the despised author of a "Guide") to warn the novice against it. Recently the Crimson Finch has become comparatively common, and I shall be glad if others who have kept it will record their experience of its disposition.

(2). Dr. Butler will no doubt deal with this point; but everyone knows that the Grey Waxbill is not usually delicate, and I do not think that Dr. Butler can have stated the contrary (*d*).

(3). Paddy rice is certainly not essential for fully acclimatised Pin-tailed Nongpareils—in fact they often cease to care for it. But it is a great

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(*d*) Mr. Farrar's experience of this and other birds is based upon a large garden aviary with plenty of cover. In such an aviary I will venture to say that the natural characteristics of birds are less likely to become obtrusive than in an indoor aviary of moderate dimensions—say five yards in length by half that in width—nevertheless, it is always unwise to crow too loudly: his experience of Scarlet Tanagers tallies with that of other aviculturists, and he may have to change his views with regard to Crimson Finches. Grey Waxbills, when kept indoors, live longer in small than in large aviaries. I do not remember to have made any general statement. I mentioned my own experience.—A. G. B.



help in getting freshly imported birds to live, especially if it be given after steeping in water—and anyone who buys unacclimatised Pintails would be very unwise to neglect its use, if he can procure it. If Mr. Farrar alludes to newly imported Pintails, when he says he “never has any difficulty in keeping them,” he has either been most unusually fortunate, or he has discovered some secret as to treatment which all of us would like to learn. Dr. Butler has recently recommended oats as a substitute for paddy.

(4). I do not know what fallacy, real or imaginary, Mr. Farrar is here attacking. Everyone knows, and has known for many years, that Tanagers can be kept quite easily on a diet of fruit and any good soft-food. Surely no modern writer has asserted the contrary?

HORATIO R. FILLMER.

### THE LONG-TAILED COMBASOU.

SIR,—I note that the reports of the last Palace Show speak of Mr. Fulljames' Long-tailed Combasou as the first imported. This is an error. Some two years ago I had one, and I made a note of it at the time, in the Magazine; and I asked if anyone had ever before seen what I called “a Combasou in full plumage?” But no one took any notice, so I was snuffed out. Now I find it was a great rarity (e).

C. D. FARRAR.

### “A MISERABLE YOUNG CUCKOO.”

SIR,—If Mr. D. Seth-Smith, who reported on the British Birds at the last Crystal Palace Show, had seen my Cuckoo when I bought him, he might justly have called him a miserable young Cuckoo—his breast-bone was almost through his skin, and he was so weak that he could not fly on to a perch a foot from the aviary floor. Seeing the wretchedness of the poor bird, I made him a hay nest in a wicker basket and fed him on chopped mealworms with my fingers. I had him near to me at night, so that I could conveniently feed him as soon as it was light in the morning; he got on wonderfully well and can now fly about the aviary.

My object in caging him for the Show was not to get a prize (as I knew his rough plumage would debar him from that) but to give the public a chance of seeing a Cuckoo—and very interested they seemed in him. His cage was a small one, but I don't think this would cause him any misery, as he very rarely stirs from his perch, although he is in an aviary about 15 feet square and 18 feet high.

I will admit this much—it *is* *fully* to keep such a bird, simply because it gives one so little pleasure. Mine never utters a sound except when he is fighting for his food: his noise then is very much like the hissing of a Goose. He is very lazy, and never bathes. In fact, I have come to the conclusion that the Cuckoo is a dirty, dull, uninteresting bird, and hardly deserves a place in the National British Bird and Mule Club's List; and should anyone feel inclined to buy one, my advice is “Don't.”

A. JONES.

(e) The Long-tailed Combasou, belonging to Mr. Fulljames, is distinguished from the Common Combasou not only by the length of its tail but by the colour of its beak, which is dark even when in full plumage. For this reason no careful observer could possibly imagine the bird to be a mere sport, as Mr. Farrar seems to have thought his was. Can Mr. Farrar's bird have been something different after all?—ED.

## ROSE-COLOURED PASTORS.

SIR,—Referring to the report on the Doves and Soft-billed Birds at the Palace Show, the pair of Rose-coloured Pastors were adult birds (Class 64). It was surprising to me to find how quickly these birds change their plumage. When I entered them for the Show they were a lovely rose colour, as bright as when bought for me (with a number of other birds) by a friend, in one of the Calcutta bazaars, in April last. Just before the Show, they began to change, and in two or three days the lovely rose tint had quite gone, and they looked quite different birds, being a grey colour, and having the appearance of being young birds.

The rarest of my nineteen exhibits at the Palace Show was a pair of Garrulous Honey-eaters (V.H.C.) in fine plumage, shown in a very large cage; only once before have I ever seen these birds exhibited at the Palace: a pair was exhibited at the February Show, and took first prize in a large class of 31 entries, including Toucans, Shâmas, and Blue-cheeked Barbets—I exhibited a very fine Blue-cheeked Barbet (V.H.C.) in this class—this year all the above were put before the Honey-eaters.

I had four of these birds, quite tame, and they would feed from my hand. A few days since, the aviary door, by some means, was left open, and two escaped; these flew about my garden and looked like Cuckoos on the wing. The next day I put out a cage with food in it, and one went in and allowed me to walk up and close the door; the other, after flying about for two days, disappeared. It being so tame, I hope someone caught it, so that it escaped the claws of some marauding cat.

JAMES B. HOUSDEN.

## BIRD-BOARDERS.

SIR,—Perhaps some of our members who have boarded-out cage-birds will kindly inform me if the following charges, per week, are unusually high: Song-birds, single, 8d. to 9d., and pairs 1/-; large species 1/- to 1/6 each.

My birds have been kept in splendid condition at these rates, but some of my friends think them excessive.

“ENQUIRER.”

## CLASSES FOR COMMON WAXBILLS, &amp;c.

SIR,—In reading Dr. Simpson's account of the Foreign Finches at Palace Show, I regret to find that he thinks it unlikely the Committee of the F. B. E. L. will consider it worth their while to provide these classes (by which I presume he means Classes 50 and 53) at any future Show. I, for one, hope the Committee will provide them, as I believe they will become two of the best-filled in the Show. It will take time for them to get known. I believe they came as a surprise to many owners of common birds, and the consequence was they had not time to get their birds into show condition and provide suitable cages. I believe that if the Green Avadavat, African Fire Finch, Lavender Finch, and Cordon Bleu were transferred to Class 50 it would give more satisfaction. I hope other members will give us their ideas.

W. OAKLEY.

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NOTE ON THE SEASONAL CHANGE OF PLUMAGE  
IN THE MALES OF THE PURPLE HONEYSUCKER  
(*Arachnechthra asiatica*)

AND OF AN ANALOGOUS AMERICAN BIRD  
(*Cœreba cyanea*).

By F. FINN, B.A., F.Z.S.,

*Deputy Superintendent, Indian Museum.*

Dr. Jerdon, in his "Birds of India," (Vol. I., p. 370) and Captain Shelley, in his Monograph of the *Cinnyridæ*, agree in assigning to the male of our common Purple Honeysucker (*Arachnechthra asiatica*) (x) besides its characteristic dress, a plumage much resembling that of the female, but marked with a broad purple streak down the ventral surface. Dr. H. Gadow, however, in the British Museum Catalogue volume (IX., p. 58) dealing with these birds, ignores this change of plumage; and Mr. Oates, in his "Birds of British Burmah," (Vol. I., p. 322) states that the change does not take place in that country, "for full-plumaged males may be obtained all the year round." He believes also that the young males of this species are clothed in female plumage all through their first winter, and thinks that the abundance of such has probably given rise to the belief in a change of plumage.

With all due deference to the opinion of so excellent an ornithologist as Mr. Oates, I venture to suggest that he is wrong, and that the authors previously cited are right, with respect to this change of plumage, at any rate in Indian examples.

In the first place, the presence of full-plumaged birds all the year round is of very little weight in disproving this change.

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(x) Called *Cinnyris asiatica* in the Cat. Birds Brit. Mus.—ED.

Marked individual variations occur in the period of change of plumage by birds which possess more than one dress, and specimens of such species may be found in more or less full plumage and undress at the same date, as I have myself seen in Ducks and Dabchicks.

This consideration disposes, I think, of Mr. Oates' first argument, but I have better evidence to bring forward.

About the middle of July last year (1897) in view of my approaching visit to England on leave, I procured a number of Honeysuckers in the hope of being able to take some alive to the London Zoological Gardens, where such birds have never previously been exhibited. All the birds I kept, with one exception, were *Arachnecthra zeylonica* (*y*), but I had, and brought home safely, one male specimen of the species I am now considering.

This bird, when I got it, was in heavy moult, and mostly purple in colour, but to my great surprise (I had taken it for a young male assuming full plumage) it gradually lost its hue, and by the time I started for England, in the first week in August, it was in the non-breeding dress, brown above and yellow below, with the median purple streak, but still retaining the orange axillary tufts.

This specimen, unfortunately, only survived its advent at the Zoological Gardens for about a fortnight (*z*) and I do not know whether it was preserved; if it was, it was probably put in spirit, as the moult had never been properly completed, and so the plumage was in bad order. It had, however, lived long enough to show that the change above referred to does really take place; for that captivity could have so affected the bird as to change the colour of the actually growing feathers, I am not

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(*y*) *Cinnyris zeylonica* of the Cat. Brit. Birds Mus.—Ed.

(*z*) I ascribe my small measure of success with living Sunbirds to the fact that I fed them too much on "slops"—sweetened milk or milk-sop. In addition to some such food given at first it would, I think, be well to supply crumbled yolk of hard-boiled egg mixed with powdered sugar, and to keep them on this as much as possible, with fruit also. None of my specimens of *Arachnecthra zeylonica* survived the voyage but one, and this died in the train *en route* from Plymouth to London. I saw this bird bullying the *A. asiatica* on one occasion, at least, and I had previously noticed that the latter bird appeared somewhat to fear its companions. When all were together in a big cage in Calcutta, it kept almost entirely to one twig in the branch put in this cage, and was in general less active in its movements than *A. zeylonica*, though it seemed less sensitive to cold on the voyage. None of the male *A. zeylonica*, some of which were moulting, showed any sign of changing their bright plumage for a duller one, as suggested by Captain Shelley in his account of the species in the Monograph above quoted. Neither did they molest each other, while I remember having had to separate two male specimens of *A. asiatica* which I had previously kept, because one was getting so badly bullied by the other.—F. F.



inclined to admit, and I, therefore, conclude that the accounts which give this bird a change of plumage are quite correct.

While on this subject, it seems to me that I may draw the attention of ornithologists to a similar change, apparently hitherto unrecorded, in a bird which, though not believed to be allied to our Sunbirds, and inhabiting the New World, nevertheless in form and habits presents at least an analogous resemblance to these. I allude to the Yellow-winged Blue Sugar-bird (*Cæreba cyanea*) of which several specimens have been exhibited in the London Zoological Society's Gardens.

During my previous acquaintance with the species there, I had been struck by the change of plumage that the male appeared to undergo, and, when in England last September, I found the Society's specimen, a male which had been acquired so long ago as 1890, actually passing into the full violet plumage from the undress stage, which had been olive-green above, and yellowish below, much resembling the coloration of the female. The tail was black, the wings yellow and black, and the legs pink-red, as in the male in full plumage. In fact, the bird presented much the same appearance as a skin in the Indian Museum collection, except that there were many more violet feathers visible.

The keepers I consulted bore me out as to the regular occurrence of the change of plumage in the male of this species, and one was of the opinion that the quills and tail changed also; but this I do not recollect seeing myself. Unfortunately this bird also soon after died, and was not preserved.

The existence of this change of coloration in the male of a *Cæreba* is interesting as tending to confirm the views of those naturalists (Dr. Scalter and Messrs. Baird, Brewer, and Ridgway) who place the *Cærebidæ* in close connection with the Tanagers, in which group the male of *Pyranga rubra* exhibits a similar seasonal alteration of plumage (a).

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(a) The specimens of *Cæreba cyanea* in the possession of our member Mr. E. Richard undergo this seasonal change.—E.D.



## PARROT NOTES.

By the Hon. and Rev. F. G. DUTTON.

(Continued from Vol. IV. page 174).

## AMAZONS.

After *Conurus*, *Brotoerys* ought to follow, but I have never kept any of that genus. I intend to do so some day, for they seem to be tameable little things, with a certain capacity for speech, but the convenient season has not arrived yet. I suggested to Mr. Phillipps, who has kept them, that he should fill up the gap, but I have not heard that he has consented to do so. I have been told they are noisy, otherwise I should have thought they ought to be more popular than Red-rumps and that tribe, for they are much more human.

The Amazons form a large subject: even of them, I dare say there are two-thirds that I have not kept. I divide them in my own mind into three classes—1st, the large; 2nd, the medium; 3rd, the small.

I do not know that the large contains more than five species, viz., *Chrysotis guildingi*, *C. farinosa*, *C. inornata*, *C. augusta*, and *C. bouqueti*. Three of these *guildingi*, *augusta*, and *bouqueti*, are very rare; the first is confined to the Island of St. Vincent, and the last two to that of Dominica. I have wondered what effect the late hurricane may have had on *guildingi*. We were told by the correspondent of the *Times* that all the trees had been destroyed, and all the winged insects. One could not help wondering if *C. guildingi* might not have gone to swell the number of extinct species.

I am not sure that I have ever seen *C. bouqueti* and *C. augusta*: *C. guildingi* I have not only seen at the Zoo, but very nearly had. They are, as I have said, confined to the Island of St. Vincent, and a clergyman, to whom I wrote, told me that they were only got by being shot, when, if the wound was not mortal, they were caged. There was a hen-bird shot near him, which was so far tamed that it learned to answer "Alec," to the question "Who shot you?" Soon after he told me this, he wrote that his son had shot one which was absolutely uninjured, and which I could have if I liked. I closed with the offer; but just as I was arranging for its transport, the bird managed to open its cage and escaped. The negroes appear to make no effort, like the Indians of South America, to take the young and bring them up: consequently there does not seem much likelihood of anyone

being able to pronounce on the bird's capabilities as a talker, or its recommendations as a pet. But if it be true that a hen shot when adult yet learned to talk, I should say the species must have latent talking powers of no mean order. I tried to find out how the male and female birds were distinguished, but have had no answer. The British Museum Catalogue describes them as alike. Considering how very unlikely it is that any of my readers should be able to acquire a specimen, it may be doubted if it is worth while for me to give a description ; but it is larger than the Mealy Amazon, and the handsomest I have seen. The prevailing colour is brown, shading into yellow. The forehead is white, the back of the head blue. The red in an ordinary Amazon's wing is replaced by orange, and the wings are partly blue ; in fact, it is the only Amazon which is a brown rather than a green bird. The beak is white.

As to *augusta*, the Zoological Gardens, according to its 1883 List, appear only to have had one ; and never a *bouqueti*, so it is not surprising that I should not have seen one.

There remain, then, *C. farinosa*, and *C. inornata*. These are only to be distinguished by the yellow spot on the head of *farinosa*. They are almost entirely green, larger than the Double-fronted, and quite unmistakable from the powdery appearance of their feathers—to which *farinosa* owes its name. I see so little difference between them that it is difficult to think they can be two species. I kept two : I think one of each kind—but I found them very unattractive. They were noisy, and though not wild, would not learn a word. Of course, a species cannot be judged by two specimens, both of which may have been hens ; and Dr. Russ, though giving them a bad character for screaming, says they are among the most talented. As the other larger parrots, the Double-fronted and Golden-naped for instance, are amongst the best talkers, it may be very possible that I chanced on two hens. I was offered one once, which was said to be an excellent talker, but I think I could not have it on approval ; I know there was some sufficient reason for my not buying it. Still, if anyone has the chance of buying one, and is not *sure* that it is a good talker, I would not advise his giving more than £2 for it ; I gave that for mine, and found it dear at the money.

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Since writing the above, I have heard from my correspondent in St. Vincent. He writes :

“ My son says that the male-bird (of *guildingi*) is less

gaudy than the female, but if in a specimen green predominates, it is a male; but at the same time there are male-birds as brilliant as females. I myself do not think his distinction is clear, and the usual belief is that the difference between the sexes cannot be defined. However, the boy is positive that he knows how to distinguish them often, if not always. The hurricane having destroyed many forest-trees, the Parrots are seen all along the coast, looking for food, and many have gone to Santa Lucia. I fancy there has been a great destruction of them, and several have been caught too weak from starvation to escape when pursued. My son went into the neighbourhood of forests on the 22nd November, but although he saw many, they had strength to fly away."

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## THE EUROPEAN ROLLER.

(*Coracias garrulus*).

By REGINALD PHILLIPPS.

In the April and May numbers of the *Avicultural Magazine*, 1898, I wrote about the European Roller, and referred specially to the possible abstention from water of the species in its wild state. And in connection with this point, at page 122, I added, "I have not ever known a Roller knowingly touch water on the ground, nor ever attempt to wash anywhere; but they will spread out their wings and feathers during a shower in warm weather." In my garden there is a rather large bathing saucer, surrounded at a distance of from two to four feet by a wooden rail about a foot from the ground. On May 4th, 1898, a mild showery day here, the two Rollers with outstretched wings were enjoying the rain on a high perch, in the manner referred to above. Suddenly the male came down and, from the rails, dashed violently into the water several times, returning to the rails after each dash. The female quickly joined him, and, excited by his mad behaviour, likewise from the rails, dashed at and just over the water repeatedly but without actually touching it; and then, as the absurdity of the proceeding seemed to strike her, she burst into one of her wild Jackass laughs, and flew right away off to the shelter of the bird-room. The dash of the male into the water was of the true Kingfisher plunge, and identical with that of the Laughing Jackass, *Dacelo gigas*. On July 6th, the plumage of both birds indicated a recent tubbing which I did not witness; but just a week later I again saw them bathing. Having pre-

sumably learned from experience that taking headers into a shallow dish (I have literally trembled with concern at the sight of a Laughing Jackass taking his dip) is not unattended with disadvantages, they now acted quite differently ; and instead of plunging into the water they hovered over it like Gulls and gently dropped into it. Probably they did not take more than four baths during the whole summer : I can speak only for three, but perhaps my aviary is cold for them. It would seem, then, that both the Roller and the Laughing Kingfisher, the great land Kingfisher of Australia, take their baths naturally with a true Kingfisher plunge, which is all the more remarkable as neither species seeks its prey in the water in the wild state. They both will feed upon lizards, occasionally bang their victims against a bough with great violence, and gulp their prey down whole like the Kingfisher. They both nest in holes, holes of trees from preference, and they lay white eggs.

During the summer I noticed from the marks in the sand in two of the houses in the bird-room that some large bird was frequently taking sand-baths ; and on August 1st I found that it was the female Roller. I cannot say whether the male likewise indulged in this pastime.

I have more than once referred to the "Jackass" laugh of my female Roller. By this expression I do not mean any of the common notes of the species, but a laugh remarkably like that of the Laughing Jackass—as the Laughing Kingfisher is familiarly called—only shorter. When my female first arrived she laughed frequently, being immensely astonished and delighted with her new home—and small wonder, when one thinks of the tiny all-wire cage from which I rescued her, which she shared with a couple of Scops Owls (*Scops giu*). Since those early days her laugh has been very rare, for it seems to be uttered only when something intensely comical or startling excites her risible faculties. I cannot say that I have ever heard the male laugh in the same way. There are very expressive substitutes for a laugh, though, from both male and female when they notice that the other birds are being served with breakfast or supper. And directly I appear with their saucers and call their names, the female flies to meet me, settles on the edge of her saucer, and, throwing her head upwards and backwards and bowing it up and down, utters a shout of triumph, or let us say of thanks, and falls to, never pausing for a moment while I walk across the room and place the saucer, with its double burden of food and feeder, in its accustomed place. The male usually precedes us,



but to the house beneath that of his wife,—for it would be about as wise to feed two bull-terriers out of the same dish as a couple of Rollers. They are very conservative birds, and like everything to be just as they have been accustomed to find it; any change or any new arrangement they regard with the gravest suspicion.

Like so many other species, the Roller occasionally throws up pellets of undigested portions of its food.

For a considerable time the terror inspired in the aviary at the sight of these birds on the wing was very great, especially among the Parrakeets. But notwithstanding their predatory appearance when flying, I have found them most inoffensive creatures if kindly treated, excepting towards their own relatives. On the other hand, my Rollers would allow themselves to be greatly worried and tormented by the Struthideas (*Struthidea cineria*) and the Satin Bower-bird.

In April and May of 1898, they made several attempts at nesting, and became very excitable. Their most serious designs were made on a log-nest in which a Redrump was sitting. Several attempts were made by the two birds to obtain a footing here, the female always leading the assault and perching in the aperture. On their approach the male Redrump would dash into the log like a flash, in order to aid in the defence. Later, they again made for this log; and the female, sitting in the aperture and swaying her tail up and down, would roar with laughter on finding that it was tenantless, while the male, close behind her, would chuckle with suppressed glee. But nothing came of it, probably because of the Satin Bower-bird, though possibly because they may have been too young: for the yearlings of some large species will not do more than play at nesting—at least that is my experience.

As has been pointed out, the Roller is very like the Laughing Kingfisher in many of its habits, movements, and ways; and it has the habit (as has also *Dacelo gigas* if I remember rightly) of slowly swaying its tail up and down after alighting on a perch, when sitting on one's hand, and at other times when in an uncertain mood or at all aroused. It is a bird of the sun; and in dull or foggy weather, of which we have plenty here in London, it seems much disposed to mope. When at rest it squats on its perch, never, I think, standing on one leg. The two, although friendly, never cuddle together side by side.

Mr. Meade-Waldo, who is well-acquainted with the species



in its wild state and also in captivity, once told me that in Spain they frequent the vineyards for the purpose of feeding on the smaller lizards, etc., which they invariably swallow whole, and in the same manner that the Kingfisher swallows fish, and that in captivity they will eat small fish. He likewise stated that they have a *full* spring moult and also an autumnal moult. Neither of my present birds moulted in 1897, their year of birth. From January to March, 1898, the female moulted fully and the male partially: but the latter recommenced moulting towards the end of October, and the female has since followed suit.

Mr. Howard Saunders says of this species in his *Illustrated Manual of British Birds*, "The food consists of beetles and other insects captured on the ground." In the summer, when my birds were frequently in the garden—for the Roller must have plenty of space if it is to have a chance—I found that when I tossed mealworms to the male he caught them in the air nearly as cleverly as the Drongo (*Dissemurus paradiseus*) does, from which circumstance I should feel disposed to say, even without further evidence, that the species takes its food occasionally in the air. I have read somewhere, or have been told, perhaps by Mr. Meade-Waldo, that the Roller (I understood the European Roller to be referred to) is in the habit of following flights of locusts for the purpose of feeding on them, taking them in the air quite readily.

Mr. Meade-Waldo, in a letter dated 16th April, 1898, mentioned a curious circumstance: "I have a splendid male (European Roller) in an aviary here; he has assumed perfect adult breeding plumage. He has always fed voraciously on chopped birds, mice, cockroaches, mealworms, lizards, etc., but now, for no apparent reason beyond a strong migratory impulse, he has refused all food for ten days (I learned afterwards that this fast lasted a fortnight); he is in perfect health, strong, and looks hard, just as if he was on his full diet. I imagine he must be living on some great store of internal fat, which is provided to carry him through his migrations. He is quite tame, in a large and very warm outdoor aviary, in company with two pairs of Sand Grouse and a pair of Trumpeter Bullfinches."

My male holds himself up better than the female, and seems to be a stouter bird. He is also a good deal the more adventurous of the two.

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# NOTES ON THE ROCK THRUSH IN CAPTIVITY.

(*Monticola saxatilis*).

By the Rev. HUBERT D. ASTLEY, F.Z.S.

In the spring of 1891, in the month of May, I reared up from the nest a brood of Rock Thrushes, one of which I still have in perfect condition and health : a male bird, hatched in Northern Italy amongst the rocks where the mountains rise up from one of the greater lakes towards the Swiss frontier. Mr. Seebohm has described the haunts of the Rock Thrush as embracing some of the wildest of scenes. " Its summer home is amongst the rocky gorges of the mountains, in and amongst the old ruins, ravines, and rough broken ground strewn with rock fragments, with here and there a few stunted trees or bushes. . . . His winter home in Africa is in the neighbourhood of the Arab burial places, on the borders of the arid desert, the vast and trackless Sahara, the gorges, embankments, rocky bluffs and ravines, and the oases of the desert."

In June of 1897, I visited a haunt of these beautiful birds in France amongst the glorious hills of Auvergne, a spot where, just above the carriage road, a scattered mass of boulders had been thrown as it were by a giant hand on to the grassy slope ; and there, besides some wheatears and pipits of sorts, was quite a small colony of Rock Thrushes. I counted four or five males in full plumage, in addition to females and fully fledged young ones. The males were running after each other over the rocks, puffing out their feathers and singing every time they settled afresh, their rufous-coloured tails in constant vibration after the manner of Redstarts.

With regard to rearing these birds from the nest, I have personally not found any difficulty. Cleanliness is most important. I kept the young ones, which, when first taken, were just beginning to have a good growth of feathers, in a covered basket on fresh hay, taking care to shake the droppings away so that there should be no accumulation near the birds. The hay was either freshly shaken out each morning, or else entirely renewed. When doing so, I simply placed the young Thrushes on a piece of flannel, and by handling them gently day by day, and talking to them, accustomed them to my touch, so that, to this day, the bird I have will fly on to my hand when loose in a room, and will there sing. I fed them upon a mixture of insectivorous food with some fresh and finely-chopped raw

beef added, allowing them, as soon as they could hop about, to dabble round a saucer of water on the floor of the room.

They loved very early in life to hop into the shallow water and wash in a babyish fashion, and by this means they kept their feet clean.

In the autumn their plumage was much the same as the adult female. A pretty speckled brown, the feathers having pale margins, the breast of a warmer yellow, the tail rufous.

Males of a year old, or even two years old, in summer plumage, are not nearly so brilliant as they are in their third and consecutive years.

My Rock Thrush has always moulted most regularly and most thoroughly in August or even the latter end of July, and again in February, perhaps commencing towards the end of January. At the beginning of March he is in full and perfect breeding plumage. He has always been so regular in this latter respect, however cold the weather may have been, that I imagine one would find his relations who are at liberty in Africa changing their feathers at precisely the same time of the year.

The larger feathers of the wing and the tail feathers are only grown once a year at the autumnal moult. My bird always moults very rapidly, the feathers coming out in showers when once he commences, and the new ones appearing very quickly. Last season his breeding plumage was beautifully defined. The cobalt blue of his head and neck being sharply outlined against the rich chestnut of the whole breast and under surface. The pure white patch on the back is very conspicuous when he is out of his cage and runs along the floor of the room with his body feathers puffed out like an angry cat's fur, whilst he lowers his head and depresses tightly the feathers on it.

The wings are brown ; the upper part of the back and the shoulders being dark bluish grey ; the tail bright rufous, the two centre feathers being browner. Round the eyes, which are hazel, the skin becomes bright yellow as the breeding plumage is assumed.

But what is most curious is the love song of the Rock Thrush, with the accompanying attitudes and movements. My bird treats me to this performance, and although he will go through it whilst others are looking on (at a respectful distance), I have never known him make love to anyone except myself. From March to July is the period during which he indulges in these antics. It generally takes place on my entering the room

after an absence of an hour or more. He commences by throwing his head upwards, his neck becoming extremely thin and almost snake-like in appearance, and his whole body compressed, whilst the wings are drooped, and the tail beautifully spread into a broad fan, making it look three times its normal size. As the bird commences these movements, he utters a quick low warble, moving the head from side to side, the bill pointing immediately upwards. Gradually the warble becomes louder and faster until it would seem as if the notes could not come fast enough, whilst at the same time the bird runs rapidly backwards and forwards in front of me, the tail spread and quivering as he moves, the performance lasting about half-a-minute. This undoubtedly would be his manner of attracting his wife (*b*).

My bird has learnt to whistle a short impromptu tune from me, which he will pipe out at any time of the day or night if he even hears my voice in the distance. At times he will fasten himself by his bill on to my hand and throw himself apparently into a great rage, not suffering me to touch anything in the room, and occasionally perching on my head with the hopes of depriving me of my brains; at least it *feels* like that!!

If let out of his cage at breakfast time, he will fly on to the table and trip rapidly amongst the dishes, piping all the time, and quite ready to seize your pat of butter! A most *charming* bird. But this latter propensity in him may have altered your opinion!

## ON THE JAY AS A CAGE-BIRD.

By PERCY W. FARMBOROUGH, F.Z.S.

The Jay, so far as my experience has taught me, is a most intelligent and interesting cage-bird, provided the cage be sufficiently large. An acquaintance of mine, when I told him in the course of a general conversation that I had a Jay, said "What, have you got one of those filthy birds? I had one, but 'never no more.' Why, do you know it is the dirtiest bird there is! it is perfectly impossible to keep it clean; we had it from a relation in the country as a young bird; we fed it on bread and milk, and kept it in a nice cage which the wife cleaned out twice a week, and yet, in spite of all our attention and care, it became such a 'stinker' we had to give it away. I'll let you have the

(*b*) This is much the same position as is assumed by the Blue Robin (*Sialia sialis*) after pairing.—A. G. B.



cage cheap if you like!" I thanked him for his offer, and said that I was sorry that I was not in want of it. He replied, "Well, I'll give it to you, I want to get rid of it."

A few days later the cage came to hand—a beautiful arrangement of brass wire and inlaid wood, just about large enough for the Jay to turn round in; there was no room at all for exercise, and really it was about the most unfit cage that could have been used. I was not surprised, after hearing that the bird was fed on bread and milk, that it was dirty, especially when the cage was cleaned out only twice a week; but when I saw the cage I was simply astounded that a man had no more sense than to keep a bird the size of a Jay in it. The smallest cage used by the writer, for even such birds as Linnets, is 32 inches long by 34 inches high and 24 inches wide.

A cage for a Jay should certainly be not less than the above size; the door should be a large one, so that the interior can be cleaned out properly *every day*. A small door is an abomination, as it prevents the free movement of the arm inside the cage. Personally, I prefer the turn-rail to a sliding tray. My objection to a sliding tray is that, after any length of time, the splashing of water, caused by the bird when it bathes, causes the wood to warp and stick, preventing the easy withdrawal of the tray—the drawer of the cage, above mentioned, when I tried to take it out, remained stuck to the cage, the brass knob and veneered front coming away in my hand—whilst a turn-rail has simply to be pulled open, and a scraper introduced to effectually remove any excreta and refuse there may be.

The Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*) is a bird which is familiar to most dwellers in the country, but town-folk know it as a rule by pictures or stuffed specimens in the Natural History Museum.

In Dr. Butler's work on "British Birds," it is stated that in Kent the nest of the Jay is rarely seen. In Shropshire, round Delbury (or more correctly, Diddlebury) I had no difficulty in taking several nests, and although shot by keepers, the bird is a common one in the district. In Hertfordshire, too, the Jay is fairly common, although, naturally, not to the extent it is in Shropshire (c).

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(c) I think I only twice, or at most three times, took the nest of this bird in Kent, but I have seen as many as five birds together on the outskirts of a Kentish wood. The cage in which I keep my Jay measures 5 feet 3 inches long, 3 feet 4 inches high, 2 feet deep; my draw-trays are of zinc and I use plenty of sand and shingle. I do not find a daily cleansing necessary, and there is no smell.—A. G. B.

I have repeatedly seen from 10 to 20 Jays cross a ride in a wood in Kent.—E.G.B. M.-W.



The young are easily hand-reared. My plan was to feed them on barleymeal and ants'-eggs made into a crumbly paste with raw hens'-eggs (without the shells, of course) and supplemented with pieces of raw meat. On this diet they thrived rapidly and developed into fine large birds.

The above food, with the addition of beetles and other large insects, formed the diet when adult, and I am certain that my Jays were in much better condition and plumage than that of the gentleman mentioned above. I allowed my birds occasionally to come out of the cage; they got very tame and exceedingly impudent—nearly as “cheeky” as a Jackdaw.

## THE LIMITS OF LEGITIMATE AVICULTURE.

By H. R. FILLMER.

No doubt all aviculturists are satisfied as to the morality of keeping birds in captivity—the fact of their being aviculturists shews that they do not agree with the amiable enthusiasts who consider it cruel and wicked. But of the general public who are not aviculturists—the outsiders in fact—there is undoubtedly a considerable section who are opposed to the capture of wild birds for cage or aviary, and some, like Mr. W. H. Hudson, go so far as even to condemn the keeping of Canaries.

We may rightly regard this as fanaticism, born of sentimentality and ignorance, but at the same time we should be wise if we do what we can to disarm criticism by dissociating ourselves from certain practices for which aviculture may be blamed, and which most of us regard as outside “the limits of legitimate aviculture.”

I should like it to be clearly understood that I am not seeking to lay down the law as to what is legitimate and what is illegitimate—the decision of every point as it arises must be left to the good sense of the avicultural community—but merely to indicate in a general way what I believe to be the tendency of opinion among modern aviculturists.

I think the feeling is growing that we ought, as much as possible, to encourage the keeping of birds in aviaries, and discourage the use of cages. While if cages be used it is agreed that they should be fairly large ones, and the abominable little prisons still too often seen are generally condemned.

Some consider bird-shows cruel. With this I cannot agree. Although I am not myself an exhibitor, I believe that Shows have their uses, and on the whole do more good than harm. But it must be conceded that many things connected with Shows are capable of improvement from a humanitarian point of view. The suggestion has been made that the Show Committees should reserve power, under the rules, to disqualify any exhibit sent in a cage which they consider too small or otherwise cruelly unsuitable, and also to either remove the bird into a proper cage until the close of the Show, or return it immediately to the owner. I think that some such rule is really necessary.

A larger and more important question (and the one which I had chiefly in my thoughts when I chose the title for this paper) is as to whether certain species and groups of birds are not, by their very nature, so unsuited for captivity as to make their confinement in itself an act of cruelty. Personally I feel bound to answer the question in the affirmative, and I should be disposed to put a good many species "outside the limits." All the species of Swallows seem most ill-adapted for life in cage or aviary, and I think we ought to do all we can to discourage their capture. There are other species, such as the Wren, the Chiff-chaff, and the Willow-warbler, which endure captivity so badly (chiefly because of food difficulties) that their capture seems almost equally undesirable. If the secret of keeping these birds in health could be discovered, the objection would vanish—but so long as their confinement leads to the death of nine out of ten within a few weeks, and ninety-nine out of a hundred within a few months, it appears mere cruelty to cage them.

Another practice which we all agree in condemning is the endeavouring to keep delicate insectivorous birds while unwilling or unable to bestow upon them the care and attention, and the somewhat expensive and troublesome food, which they require. The keeping of such birds as the Nightingale is perfectly legitimate, if they be *properly* kept; but such keeping involves a considerable expenditure of both time and money, and those who are not prepared to incur this should restrict themselves to seed-eaters.

In writing these notes I have endeavoured to avoid undue dogmatism. I hope my readers will understand that my object is to suggest a line of thought, not to lay down a series of rules.

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## REVIEW.

*Notes on Cage-Birds (Second Series) or Practical Hints on the Management of British and Foreign Cage-Birds, Hybrids and Canaries. By various Hands. Edited by W. T. Greene, M.A., M.D. (L. Upcott Gill. Price 6/-).*

This is a reprint in book form of "a selection from the various articles, letters, and notes relating to Cage-Birds, that have appeared in the *Bazaar* from 1882 (when the First Series was issued) to the present day."

Such a book as this must necessarily be of a rather scrappy and hap-hazard character, but it contains a good deal of information worthy of preservation in more permanent form than the column of a newspaper, and we think aviculturists will find it interesting.

The fact that every letter in the book is signed either by initials or by a *nom de plume* detracts somewhat from its value. The statements of an anonymous writer are not entitled to so much weight as those of one who gives his name. Still, the identity of H. D. A., F. G. D., R. P., C. P. A., W. T. C., J. H. V., W. O., and others, is sufficiently transparent, and to readers of the *Avicultural Magazine*, at any rate, will be no mystery. The letters appear to have been somewhat severely edited, so much so, indeed, as to have lost nearly all individuality in the process.

Such an experienced journalist as Dr. Greene may be trusted to make the most of the materials at his command, and it is therefore scarcely needful to say that the book is well arranged and eminently readable.

Two instances are here recorded of Spice-birds acquiring the song of the Silver-bill, and Dr. Greene states "we have frequently heard of cases of birds that naturally sing in dumb show, or at least in such a low tone as to be inaudible to ordinary human ears, acquiring the notes of other warblers, and singing aloud." We remember a Chestnut Finch (for some years in Dr. Simpson's possession) which sang a full, loud song, much like that of a Canary. By the way, to describe the song of the typical Mannikins as "inaudible to ordinary human ears" seems somewhat of an exaggeration—it is very faint, but perfectly audible if the listener be near enough to the performer.

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

## THE MADAGASCAR WEAVER.

SIR,—Mr. Cresswell asks for the experiences of other members concerning the temper of the Madagascar Weaver. May I, without presuming to lay down any general law, give my experience.

Several years ago I bought a fine specimen and placed him in a large cage with a numerous collection of Waxbills and small finches. He proved to be the most amiable of birds, and remained for many months without causing any unpleasantness to his cage-mates, even allowing himself to be driven away from the seed-vessels by the smallest Waxbills. I afterwards gave him to a friend, who placed him in a cage with a similar collection of small finches. Here he proved himself a veritable demon, and had to be speedily removed to solitary confinement, where he eventually died. Why he should have behaved so differently in very similar surroundings I do not know. I have often seen this species kept in cages and aviaries with other smaller birds, and, as far as my experience goes, it is generally an inoffensive bird.

C. S. SIMPSON.

SIR,—I have had a Madagascar Weaver in my bird-room for about eight years. I formerly had two, as well as a Comoro Weaver; the latter killed one of the Madagascar birds and became so quarrelsome and dangerous in 1897 that I had to remove it. The single male Madagascar Weaver is still in the same aviary with a mixed collection; it quarrels with Java Sparrows and Saffron-finches and sometimes chases other Weavers, but hurts nothing: young or small birds seem to be beneath its notice.

A. G. BUTLER.

SIR,—Replying to Mr. Cresswell's query respecting this active and showy bird, from my own experience I should not hesitate to put one male amongst other birds, in even a moderate sized aviary, providing they all have sufficient roosting accommodation.

So far circumstances have compelled me to keep all my birds in cages, one of which contains a very mixed lot; which system has the one advantage that for over two years I have been able to study their little ways very closely. For twelve months I had a very bold healthy Madagascar Weaver in an ordinary single breeding-cage, 30 × 16 × 9 inches, along with two small Napoleons—one of these a very quiet inoffensive bird, and the other, though very active, very harmless. Half a cocoanut was suspended from each back corner; the two Napoleons always roosted on the edge of one, and the *Foudia* on the other. Even in this small cage the *Foudia* never quarrelled with the others although it resented their presence on its own cocoanut, driving them off with a fierce little cry. Since then I have made them a box-cage, 3 feet 6 inches square by 16 inches deep, with a half cocoanut in one top corner, a Hartz Canary-cage in the other, and two large forked apple-branches for perches. In this, for ten months, the same *Foudia*, Napoleons, and a Ribbon-finch have lived peaceably, though never a day passes without my hearing the excited shrill cry of the Madagascar ejecting trespassers from the Hartz-cage, which it has been pleased to appropriate.



I am not surprised to hear of Mr. Cresswell's experience with the Gouldian-finch. I have found the cock Gouldian so thoroughly meek as to be quite powerless against the fierce onslaughts of a vicious little Bronze Mannikin about a quarter of its own size, though the hen Gouldian has often stepped between and driven off the tormentor.

I don't think two Madagascar cocks would agree in a small space. I had another when using the smaller cage, and all went well until one day it became rather ill and weak, and the first one killed it (*d*).

They seem indifferent to cold after being acclimatized. I had no heat in the room last winter, and, strange to say, the one I have shed its beautiful scarlet coat for the first time this November, being in half colour when I bought him twenty months ago.

A. A. PEARSON.

### CRIMSON FINCHES.

SIR,—Perhaps the following may be interesting *re* Crimson Finches: To one of my friends in N. E. Queensland, who had often sent me birds, I had several times written, "Please send me all the Crimson Finches you can get." They were very scarce in that district, and for a long time I got other birds but no Crimson Finches; until a letter came which was quite a surprise to me, saying: "At last I hope to please you by sending a good number of Blood Finches (the Queensland name for the Crimson Finch); the trappers have taken quite a large number, and I am sending, *via* Brisbane, eleven-and-a-half dozen." These were put on board one of the mail steamers in charge of an officer who was a friend of mine; he enclosed the bill, which was by far the largest amount I ever paid at one time for foreign birds—he had paid a good price for them, as someone in Sydney had offered a high price.

My friend had been more than kind: I wanted Crimson Finches, but not such a number, for although my aviaries were large I was puzzled to know what I should do with one hundred and forty of these birds.

Unfortunately the ship was overrun with rats, and my friend had the greatest difficulty in protecting the birds from these midnight marauders; from this, and another unforeseen circumstance, he lost more than half on the voyage home—just sixty birds reached me.

In a large aviary these birds were most peaceable, but on putting a pair into a waggon-shaped cage with other birds, the first day the cock Crimson Finch broke the leg of the only hen Parrot Finch I had—the leg was hanging by the skin only; this bird lived some months after with only one leg. In a large aviary they will agree; but in a small one, or in a cage, they are the most combative of small birds, especially at breeding-time.

JAMES B. HOUSDEN.

SIR,—I think it is undoubtedly a "fallacy" for the Rev. C. D. Farrar to assume, because his specimens were peaceable, that good temper is characteristic of the species. I have had several specimens and made frequent attempts to keep them with other small finches, but they would certainly have killed every bird smaller than themselves, had they been permitted to remain among them. On one occasion I removed a pair

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(*d*) A bird which will thus kill another (when not breeding) is, we should say, too dangerous to be trusted in a mixed aviary. This experience of Mr. Pearson's does not support the advice given in the first paragraph of his letter.—ED.



of Crimson Finches, which had lived together for more than a year in perfect friendship, from their usual cage to a smaller one. The next morning I found the cock had most cruelly attacked and nearly killed the hen, apparently because he did not like the change of residence.

C. S. SIMPSON.

#### THE "LONG-TAILED COMBASOU."

SIR,—Unless I am very blind, Mr. Fulljames' bird is not wholly dark, but has white at any rate on the flanks; and I take it to be a specimen of the Resplendent Whydah, *Vidua hypocherina* (e).

Will not Mr. Fulljames, in the cause of aviculture, give us further particulars, and especially of the changes of plumage—if any?

And cannot Mr. Farrar say whether there are, or were, any white feathers under the wings of his bird, and whether only the four central or all of the tail feathers were elongated? Probably it was also a Resplendent Whydah; and particulars of a rare bird are always valuable.

REGINALD PHILLIPPS.

#### HYBRIDS.

SIR,—Last season I bred Canary mules from a cock Alario Finch, and also from a cock Grey-necked Serin Finch. I have two cock mules (one of each cross) which are perfectly charming songsters. The Grey-necked Serin mule (a rich jonque from a deep yellow Norwich hen) is an unusually handsome bird.

E. D. H. DALY.

#### AVIARY-BRED AVADAVATS.

SIR,—Will Mr. Todd be good enough to say if his young Avadavat is still alive, and at what age it came into colour? I lost the least robust of mine, but the other is well. They were much persecuted by the old male before I could catch them out of the aviary, and the one that died was injured. Two days afterwards the mother was found dead—she was not a strong bird at any time.

GRACE ASHFORD.

#### SOME CONTINENTAL BIRDS.

SIR,—Can any member, acquainted with European wild birds, identify two kinds from very meagre descriptions?

Last September, whilst walking with a camera down the road high above the Val d'Herens, leading from Evolena to Sion, Switzerland (height about 4,000 feet), I saw a lot of little Finch-like birds, about the size of Siskins or St. Helena Waxbills, flitting about in the brilliant sunshine, and uttering a very mellow flute-like call-note. I just caught sight of one for a few seconds on a tree-bough, and it seemed almost olive-green, but more yellowish underneath; I noticed a dark brown or black band across the throat, like the crimson line on a Ribbon Finch, perhaps not extending quite so far round. This momentary glimpse was the only one vouchsafed me. The climate at that time was very hot during the day and very cold at night.

(e) I came to this conclusion when I saw the bird at the Palace Show; but the illustration of the species in the Proceedings of the Zoological Society gives it a scarlet beak; which is incorrect.—A. G. B.

About a week before, standing near the top of the Brevent, at Chamonix (nearly 8,000 feet high), we saw, up in the sky, at a great height, apparently considerably above the summit of Mont Blanc—which would mean an elevation of over 3 miles—a flock of birds, which at that distance looked like a lot of Black Crows. Whilst watching them in a motionless mass, they began to drop, one by one, as by gravity, with such rapidity as to suggest being dashed to pieces on the rocks below, but when quite near the latter they used their wings to skim off horizontally, and settled for the night on the rocks, perhaps 100 or 200 feet below the actual summit of the Brevent, thus roosting nearly 8,000 feet above the sea level. They must have dropped 7,000 or 8,000 feet without a flap of the wing (*f*).

Whilst ascending the Brevent in the morning, we had heard a short plaintive whistle repeated frequently, which I certainly mistook for the well-known cry of the Marmot. A week after, wandering alone on a very elevated mountain-path, high above the south side of the Rhone valley, I heard the same cry, accompanied by a rustling amongst the bushes, and, directly afterwards, saw one of these Crow-like birds darting from one low bush to another as I went along, though I only caught sight of it in its flight. At close quarters it seemed a brown colour, and not nearly so large as a Crow—more like a Starling or Blackbird for size.

This is very vague information, but some practised ornithologist might possibly recognise the birds by the locality, etc. A. A. PEARSON.

#### NOTES ON WEST AFRICAN BIRDS.

SIR,—A short time ago I received a letter from one of our members—Lieut. B. Horsbrugh, of the Army Service Corps stationed at Sierra Leone,—containing some notes which will doubtless interest our readers. He says: “The commonest bird in Cape Coast is a large Yellow Weaver, the Rufous-necked, I believe; there is a tree which is a regular sight (it is near my quarters) a huge silk-cotton, and cannot contain less than eight or ten thousand nests; the birds are coming and going in swarms all day, and the noise is deafening: the males are very quarrelsome and have a habit of coming to an acacia here, biting the soft green leaves off and flying to their nests with them. I see them frequently hang upside down at the mouth of the nest, flapping their wings while they arrange the inside of it. Some I have caged are fairly tame, and I will try to bring them home: if you care for a pair I will send them to you on arrival.

“In the same tree there is another smaller Weaver, with a black face and yellow breast and head; there are not many of them, and I have not seen enough of them to describe them more fully.

“Another common bird here is the Grey-headed Sparrow (*P. diffusus*) which I recognized from your description in the *Avicultural Magazine*: I have had several caged, but they are very handy at dying unnecessarily.

“There is a small Waxbill with red rump, cheeks and bill, very common here, and another little bird about the same size, with a reddish breast, evidently a Waxbill.

“Plenty of the small Whydah with long tail and red beak are to be seen in the grassy parts near here—they seem to delight in hunting the Waxbills whenever they see them.

“I took three Grey Parrots out of a hole in a tree, and have reared them up to date.”

A. G. BUTLER.

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(*f*) Probably Alpine Choughs (*P. rhocorax alpinus*).—D. S. S.





RUFIOUS-TAILED FINCH  
(*Bathilda ruficauda*).



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THE RUFOUS-TAILED GRASSFINCH.

*Bathilda ruficauda.*

By D. SETH-SMITH, F.Z.S.

The subject of our plate this month is a rare and very beautiful little finch which inhabits (so the British Museum Catalogue informs us) "North Western and Northern Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and the interior of Australia." Being thus widely distributed over the Australian Continent, it is strange that living specimens should not be more frequently imported into Europe than they are at present.

Very little indeed appears to be known of the habits of *Bathilda ruficauda* in a wild state. Gould observed it amongst rushes in marshy situations along the sides of streams, and collected specimens on the Liverpool Plains and along the banks of the Rivers Mokai and Namoi.

About the commencement of the year 1894 a few pairs of the "Starfinch," as the species is called in Australia, were received by a London bird-dealer, who naturally asked very high prices for them. The following year several more living specimens reached England; and at the Crystal Palace Show in February, 1896, no less than four pairs of Rufous-tails were exhibited.

No specimens have, to the writer's knowledge, been imported since, and at the present time this little bird is, so far as English aviculturists are concerned, one of the rarest of foreign finches. The present writer obtained a pair of these birds in December, 1897, which had then been in England for probably a year or more. They were not in the best of plumage, and the cock had lost almost all the feathers from the back of his head. They seemed, however, to be in good health, and the cock spent most of his time, when not actually eating or sleeping, in uttering, with outstretched neck, his peculiar little pretence at a song.

This pair were placed in a warm aviary, and it soon became evident that they wished to commence house-keeping: they became bold towards their companions, and the cock would now and then take a piece of hay in his bill, holding it at its extreme end, and dance before his lady-love in a most grotesque manner.

A nest-basket was neatly lined with hay, and the operations of laying and hatching appeared to be progressing in a satisfactory manner. Both birds were now decidedly pugnacious towards any other bird that approached the nest, dashing at all intruders, heedless of consequences. A Diamond Dove had no more right near the nest than had the smallest Waxbill, and each and all had to shift. However, in the case of *Bathilda ruficauda*, as with many other birds, the bark is worse than the bite, and this little pair were never known to actually inflict any bodily harm.

Days and weeks went by, but no youngsters made their appearance; surely it was quite time for them to show themselves if, indeed, there were any there. One day both birds were seen feeding at some distance from the nest and the opportunity was taken to peep, as it was hoped, at the nestlings. Alas, however, the nest contained no young Rufous-tails; nothing, in fact, but some minute fragments of egg-shell. The inference was clear enough—eggs had been laid and had been devoured, and by the Rufous-tails themselves.

In May the pair was placed in a good-sized aviary in the garden, and although some bitter weather (for the time of the year) was experienced at the end of that month and the early part of June, the cold did not appear to distress them in the least. Amongst the branches that are thickly fastened against the walls of the aviary, a domed nest was quickly constructed, about the size and shape of an Ostrich's egg, and built in an upright position. It was composed of hay, and lined with feathers. The foundation was strongly built, but the dome was a flimsy concern and the sitting bird could be seen through it. Eggs were laid, but, as before, eaten: yet the hen (who was probably the culprit) continued to sit diligently, and, whenever she left the nest to feed, the cock would immediately take possession of the imaginary eggs and steadily try to hatch them.

The unfortunate habit of egg-eating seems to be common with the Rufous-tailed Grassfinch: Miss Hodgson has mentioned it on page 58 of Vol. IV., and Mr. Savage, of Rouen, has informed the writer that it has been noticed by aviculturists on his side of the Channel. If it were not for this habit there

would seem to be little difficulty in inducing this species to breed in our aviaries : it is almost always ready to nest, and it seems to be as hardy as most of the small Australian finches, far hardier, in fact, than either Bichenov's or Gould's.

The cock of the pair above described met with an untimely end last September (1898). A cock Yellow Sparrow (*Passer luteus*) had for some months occupied the same aviary, and had never appeared to be at all dangerous towards his companions. One day a wife was obtained for him, and no sooner was she put into the aviary than the pair commenced to murder their companions. They were very soon captured and caged, but not until the gallant little cock Rufous-tail and a hen Crimson-finch (*Neochmia phaeton*) had been murdered.

A new mate was soon found for the widow, and the pair now live very happily together. The new bird is a much finer specimen than was his predecessor ; but his song is almost inaudible, whereas that of the first male could be clearly heard at a distance of ten or fifteen feet.

The song of *Bathilda ruficauda*, which is very frequently uttered, closely resembles that of Gould's Grassfinch, and seems to prove that Dr. Sharpe has correctly placed this species next to the more typical Grassfinches, although in many respects it somewhat resembles the Waxbills.

The present writer's observations of *Bathilda ruficauda* have led to the opinion that it may safely be kept with the smallest and most helpless of birds, providing the aviary is not very small. It will, it is true, when nesting, make headlong dashes at any bird that may chance to approach its nest too closely, but it will do no actual harm, and when not nesting is perfectly peaceable. It must, however, be remembered that this opinion is based upon a somewhat limited experience of three examples only, and other specimens may be found to differ somewhat in temperament.

The Rufous-tailed Grassfinch has been bred in France and possibly in England, although no account of the rearing of the young has as yet been published. As to food, canary- and millet-seed form its staple diet in captivity ; chickweed and flowering grass should also be given when obtainable. The specimens above described have occasionally been seen to tackle a mealworm, but animal food does not appear to be necessary, except, perhaps, when there are young to be reared, when probably egg-food of some kind and soaked ants'-eggs would be beneficial.

The following is a description of the adult male—Above, olive-brown gradually shading into olive-yellow on the under parts; the throat, breast, and flanks are covered with white spots which become smaller as they approach the chin; face, bright crimson with minute white spots on the sides and chin; upper tail-coverts, rosy-pink with large whitish spots; tail-feathers, dull red; bill, bright red; iris, orange; feet, yellow.

The female is like the male, but much duller in colour, with scarcely any red on the face.

The young are said to be of an uniform buffy brown, the eye yellowish olive, surrounded by a narrow line of olive; bill reddish brown.

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## THE INDIAN ROLLER.

*Coracias indicus.*

By REGINALD PHILLIPPS.

IN June, 1898, when in a bird-shop, my attention was attracted by a Roller. In the dull light, and from its general shape and carriage, notwithstanding its rather smaller and more feminine bill, it seemed to be a specimen of our common species; but on a closer inspection I found a very different bird, none other than the Indian Roller. Presumably it was an 1897 bird in the middle of its "spring" moult, which perhaps had been retarded or unduly prolonged by its cage life and recent travels. The body was partly featherless; but the small feathers quickly grew, and in this respect the plumage became perfect. Not so, unhappily, with the flights and tail feathers; these had been grown and ground to powder before I received it, and very few have been reproduced up to date.

Owing, probably, to careless treatment, I have found this individual specimen exceptionally timid and nervous. But the considerate and tender care that has since been bestowed upon it has not been without its influence for good; and it has so far recovered its composure that when in difficulties I can, with patience, induce it to come on to the back of my open hand, and remain there sufficiently long to enable me to carry it to its house: it has in it the making of a nice bird.

My male European Roller has been very hard upon his Indian cousin, and attacks it pretty savagely sometimes, so the latter keeps a great deal in its house, in which it is always shut up at night and at meal-times.



When I approach, this bird invariably faces me, and I rarely see its back ; moreover it is in the shade of its house ; so the following particulars must be received only as a rough indication of the plumage.

This Indian Roller has the appearance of being slimmer and slightly smaller than my female European, and distinctly less bulky than the male. The bill and claws seem to be black, but probably are very dark brown ; all round the base of the bill, sandy, the eye-ring and the bare triangular spot behind the eye being much of the same colour. A large cap of light blue-green on the crown, and a line of the same over the eye. Sides of face, fore neck, chest and breast lilac- or purple-brown ; but round the neck, broadening out on the chest and tinging the cheeks, there is a strong wash of purple-lilac ; and the bird is further ornamented in the front by light-coloured shaft-streaks, radiating from the throat sideways and downwards, the whole having a very beautiful effect. Thighs, abdomen, under and upper tail coverts, and about two inches—above and below—of all the tail feathers but the two central, light blue. Basal ends of tail feathers (excepting the two central) and a narrow band at the tips, beautiful deep blue. I fancy the colours of the primaries, or of a good many of the flights, are the same, and arranged more or less on the same plan. Mantle and back generally, and the two central feathers of the tail, light olive brown. The front parts of the closed wing seem to be light blue or blue green, and on the shoulder there is some brilliant purplish blue. Legs and toes (not claws) whity-brown. The eye seems to be dark brown, but perhaps it is not quite so dark as it appears.

The notes of the bird, so far as I am acquainted with them, bear a family likeness to those of *C. garrulus*, but are shorter, sometimes almost forming a bark, and less musical. Ill-natured people would, I fear, speak of them as harsh.

It swings its tail up and down like the European bird, only more so, probably through nervousness.

I have never seen this bird drink, nor any signs of the water, always in its house, ever having been touched. During a mild shower in the summer, it occasionally managed to get into the garden and have a shower-bath, on the highest possible perch if allowed to remain there by the other birds ; but its craving for a sun-bath was invariably acute.

Neither have I seen it touch sop, nor yet fruit—dried or otherwise—but it seems to take a little of the former. When

first received it ate a good deal of dry crumbled biscuit, but takes very little of it now.

The bird has never ailed since it has been with me, and, considering that it is not fully clothed and cannot take much exercise, is perhaps not more susceptible to cold than the European Roller. They all revel in the sun, and dislike our dull cheerless November weather.

I cannot make up my mind as to the sex; but the face and bill seem feminine.

Doubtless the food in its wild state is practically the same as that of the European Roller.

I should suppose that a good specimen of the Indian Roller in its native sun would be a glorious creature.

*Habitat.*—"From Asia Minor to Persia and N. Arabia, thence to Baluchistan. The whole of the Indian Peninsula and Ceylon."

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## NOTES ON MY DOVES IN 1898.

By O. E. CRESSWELL.

There may be some of our members to whom a few notes may be of interest on some rare Pigeons and Doves, which I have added to my collection during the past year; and also upon the breeding of one or two other species which are not rare.

In the month of April, I received from a kind correspondent in the West Indies some large crates, containing about thirty inmates of the genus *Columba*. They travelled from the London docks through a bitterly cold night, and arrived on a bitterly cold morning. I was from home, and my headman in the aviaries found, with consternation, some lovely little Turtles almost dead. They looked beyond power of feeding; but his promptitude saved them all: in the warmth of a kitchen they came round, and turned their attention to white millet; but I will presently go into fuller particulars about them. The consignment as a whole was of interest from two points of view—firstly, that, as far as I can discover, three of the species have very rarely been imported; secondly, because some of the less rare species had been hand-reared from the nest, and are, therefore, absolutely tame. The great drawback to the race is its extreme timidity: consequently one specially appreciates tame Doves. I will take them in order.

First, were six large and curious Wood Pigeons—"Ramyers" they are called in Barbados—I presume a variation

of the French "Ramiers." On their arrival (for I had never seen their like) I referred to my favourite but ponderous tome, Temminck's "Les Pigeons," splendidly illustrated by Madame Knip. It is, as far as my knowledge goes, by far the finest, though not always absolutely correct, work on its subject. There, under the name *Pigeon à nuque écaillée*, I at once found a perfect picture of the species. In the Catalogue of the British Museum (*Columba*, p. 280) it is described as *Columba squamosa*; elsewhere as *Columba corensis* and *Columba portoricensis*. It is a large Pigeon about 14 inches long, with a flat and rather snake-like head. Its general colour is dull and plumbeous, but this is relieved by a lovely cape at the back of the neck, each feather of which is crossed by bands of rich metallic violet and velvety black; the eye-ceres are yellowish red, and the beak red shading into yellow towards the tip.

I had the misfortune soon to lose three out of the six; one arrived with and died of a bronchial affection, the two handsomest cocks succumbed to the common ill of closely-caged birds, excessive fat. The long cold late spring was very embarrassing; were the time to come over again, I should put them all into an outdoor aviary the first sunny day, but I waited for real warmth and, meanwhile, lost these three. The survivors seem perfectly healthy out of doors, and I hope may this year enjoy life and possibly breed in a large enclosure which is slowly approaching completion, and is destined to be a "paradise" for many birds.

Second.—The next was a single specimen, not rare and at first sight not beautiful, but in the hand its vinous tints and delicate pencillings were really so—a Picazuro Pigeon, *Columba picazuro* of the Museum Catalogue. She had come in a ship to Barbados, probably the pet of sailors, where my friend bought her for me. With him, she paired with a Ramyer. With me, she took no notice of any other bird; she was the tamest and most gentle creature possible, lavished all her affection on human beings, and delighted to nestle her head in my hand. She could not fly. For some weeks I put her in a large cage, and then put her out in a summer aviary, where my Zebra and Diamond Doves and such small fry nest. She molested nothing, and spent her time in a quiet way, till one hot morning we found her dead—another victim of much food and little exercise.

Third.—The next lot—an extremely rare and valuable importation of six, about a third larger than Barbary Turtles—were procured from Tobago. The first thing which struck me

in them was a brilliant sky-blue cere round the eyes. Their plumage reminded me of the pictures of *Columba rufaxilla*, in the old "Naturalists' Library;" but neither there nor in any description in the Museum Catalogue, of that or of cognate species of *Leptoptila*, could I find any notice of their striking eyes. The fact is that cabinet naturalists are seldom acquainted with any but dead specimens, hence many omissions and many errors of description, especially of eyes and beaks which change colour in death: a proof, if such were wanting, of the use of scientific aviculture. After some months, one of these Doves died, and I soon saw that the beauty of the eye cere did not survive. The authorities of the Museum have pronounced the species to be *Leptoptila wellsi* from Grenada. I think I may accurately call them very rare, for the Museum seems to possess but one skin. Their tints are soft and pretty—back olive-brown, the back of the neck having a purple sheen, under parts white shading into pink. I have not found them interesting; after nine months they are still shy, hardly ever utter a sound, and take no notice of each other. I think I made a mistake in not putting them out last summer. This large arrival had over-taxed my accommodation: I was afraid of over-crowding the outdoor aviaries, and so have kept them continuously in a bird-room.

Fourth.—Next came about four pairs of *Zenaida aurita*. I have before received this species, and described them in "Notes on my Doves in 1897." I will not repeat myself, but I may add one or two particulars, as my former notes were written a few months after the arrival of my first consignment.

(a). Those received in June, 1897, bore last winter with apparent comfort in a by no means sheltered outdoor aviary, where all still survive.

(b). The cocks are terribly quarrelsome. Pairs frequently nest, and eggs are laid, but hatching is out of the question, such are their squabbles.

(c). They are decidedly tameable. Two of the last lot (fortunately a cock and a hen) are absolutely tame. I have them in a cage, and the cock comes to the open door to be petted.

Fifth.—Last in order, because least in size, but by no means so in interest or rarity, are the tiny Turtles of Barbados, *Chamæpelia passerina* of the British Museum Catalogue. They are truly exquisite and delicate little birds. Madame Knip's illustrations of them in Temminck's "Pigeons" hardly do justice to their elegant form and dainty gait. They are barely six inches long, and run and fly with astounding rapidity. The



general effect of their plumage is a delicate pencilling of silver greys, suffused on the breast with tints of madder. They are terribly difficult to import, from their extreme timidity ; hence the fact that, though they are found, with many local variations, over great tracts of S. America, in Mexico, the West Indian Islands, and even in California, they are hardly ever offered for sale in Europe. My friend in Barbados learnt that over and over again cages of them had been shipped for England, but that none ever arrived alive. They absolutely batter themselves to pieces. Some which he procured for me did so before they could be shipped. However, he made the attempt, dispatched ten in a very snug box, and five reached me. I have already alluded to the state of collapse in which they arrived, owing, I think, to their being supplied with big grain and no small seed. For many months I left them in a hot kitchen, then for a while in an outdoor room, and from August until lately in a very warm outdoor aviary, not artificially heated but partially glazed and catching every ray of sun. The moult has been a difficulty : two succumbed to it, but one pair are in fine plumage and condition, and show signs of pairing.

Sixth.—Lastly a single Necklace Dove (*Turtur chinensis*), which doubtless had arrived in some ship from the East Indies, accompanied this party from the West ; very acceptable he was, for I had hens but no pure cock of the race. I have had many beautiful hybrids from these hens, which have picked up strange husbands, those by a Blue Senegal Dove being the handsomest. I mated this cock with a hen which came from Manilla six years ago, and they nested at once.

Reading Dr. Butler's article on the breeding of Necklace Doves, in an early number of the Magazine of last year, I was struck by his remark, "This species has been bred by at least two aviculturists in Germany," implying, apparently, that their breeding is not very common. My own nest almost all the year round, more regularly than Barbary Turtles. I remember, too, in early childhood seeing them nesting in the shrubberies of a Middlesex garden. Their owner kept a few, which he called "African Doves," among many Barbary Turtles, and in summer left the aviary-doors open—all flew in and out and nested at their own sweet will.

To pass from my new acquisitions to old favourites—At last, in 1898, I reared one Bronze-nape (*Humeralis*). Annually the parents have hatched about five pairs, which they invariably desert when about a fortnight old, after bestowing upon them

the most devoted care in their early days. This one I rescued and transferred to a Barbary pair. Much the same is the fate of the young Zebras (*Geopelia striata*): the parents nest incessantly, and go to nest again too soon; but during great heat one or two are reared annually in spite of parental indifference. I think this apparently unnatural behaviour of the old birds may easily be accounted for. In a state of nature they are at once occupied and fatigued in providing for their nestlings; in captivity food is always at hand, and the desire to breed again is induced before the offspring can do without the warmth of the mother at night.

I find Zebras wonderfully hardy for Indian birds; I see no sign of chilliness yet (Jan. 18) in some which I have still in their cold summer aviary, whence they generally migrate in November into winter quarters.

## THE BLACKCAP AS AN AVIARY-BIRD.

By SEPTIMUS PERKINS.

By common consent the Nightingale takes the first place as a songster among our native birds, and I suppose few would dispute the right of the Blackcap to the second place. The Nightingale and the Blackcap, being thus recognised as our two leading feathered vocalists, have become associated together in the minds of most people, and this association is emphasized at the large Bird Shows, where the species are almost always classed together. There is, however, but little in common between the two birds—which are, by the way, placed in different sub-families by most ornithologists.

I am not prepared to say that, provided both birds be fed with equal wisdom and care, the Blackcap will live longer in captivity than the Nightingale—but that the Blackcap will live and thrive on food upon which the Nightingale will speedily sicken and die, is an undoubted fact. Therefore I think the Blackcap may fairly be considered much the hardier bird. Indeed, I will go further than that, and say that in my opinion the Blackcap, of all the small insectivorous birds, is the easiest to keep, while the Nightingale is—well, scarcely one of the most difficult, but still a hard bird to keep in health.

To those who are taking up with soft-food birds I would say, “Begin with a Blackcap.” Give him a good-sized aviary, plenty of baths, as much fruit as he will eat, sop made with boiled milk (unsweetened), and some mixture of insectivorous

food containing ants'-eggs and a little, but not too much, egg. The chief danger is that the bird should become too fat, therefore the food should not be so appetising as to induce him to over-eat himself—and the more he confines himself to fruit and sop the less danger there will be of fits. Give a few mealworms now and then—but the Blackcap is not very keen on them, and almost any other kind of live insect is more wholesome.

I do not know why Dr. Bradburn made the astonishing statement that the Blackcap is "a very much more delicate bird than the Nightingale." This is not my experience, nor that of other aviculturists with whom I have discussed the point. Dr. Bradburn, however, appears to recommend that the bird should be fed just like the Nightingale, that is, mainly on ants'-eggs. Now, I have never found the Blackcap to be fond of ants'-eggs, and can quite believe that on such a diet he would not live long.

The female is readily distinguished from the male by a reddish brown colour of the head—in fact, it is not a "blackcap" at all.

A hand-reared Blackcap makes a most charming pet, but is generally less robust than wild-caught specimens (*a*).

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## CORRESPONDENCE

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### THE "LONG-TAILED COMBASOU."

SIR,—I have pleasure in giving the fullest particulars possible, but as the bird is now "out of colour" I cannot make so complete a reply as I could wish.

Our member Mr. Maxwell was the first owner of the bird, after the dealer, and he bought it as a "Paradise Combasou," and entered it as such at the February Show at the Palace, 1898. The bird's tail was lost in catching him out of the aviary, so the entry was marked absent.

I am sorry that I have not a very distinct recollection of the bird's plumage when "in colour," but as my present collection numbers some four hundred birds, and the bird in question is one of about a hundred flying about in a very large aviary, I trust I may be excused.

Mr. Maxwell informs me that the bird has only *two* long tail-feathers when in full plumage. To the best of my recollection, the bird had, when in condition, a reddish beak, and no white whatever in his plumage. Out of colour, he is only to be distinguished from a Paradise Whydah in the same condition by his red legs and smaller size.

In the hope that the exhibit may be of interest to our members, I have entered the bird for the forthcoming Palace Show, and after the Show

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(*a*). I quite agree with all that Mr. Perkins has written respecting this bird. I should say that there was no difficulty in keeping a Blackcap, and though I should not give sop myself, I daresay it would answer if frequently changed.—A. G. B.

I will keep it under observation throughout its next change of colour and development of tail. I have adopted the suggestion of Mr. Phillipps and Dr. Butler, and have entered the bird as a Resplendent Whydah.

HENRY J. FULLJAMES.

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SIR,—In reply to Mr. Phillipps, I beg to say that my Long-tailed Combasou had some white under the wings and was flecked with white on the abdomen. It was only the central feathers of the tail that were long. I had the bird about two years: half the year he had a short tail and mottled brown body, and when he came into black plumage he grew a long tail. When I bought him he looked like an ordinary Combasou out of colour. (*b*)

C. D. FARRAR.

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### CRIMSON FINCHES, ETC.

SIR,—Having had a lot of Crimson Finches, Red-rumps, Long-tailed Grass-finches and Parrot-finches brought me last November, I can testify to the quarrelsome disposition of the Crimson Finch.

One cock which I have now will clear the decks of all other birds, be they ever so many and without regard to their size. When mine arrived, all the hens were together, and I kept them so for a week; then I paired them, and out of five pairs only two pairs agreed—all the others fought like mad; but one cock put in with other species settled down and sings away quite contentedly.

Long-tailed Grass-finches, when first imported, will agree for a while, but soon they begin to choose their mates, and then a general scramble begins—pitched battles are the order of the day, till night comes on. They are truly named Squatting Grass-finches, as they do a lot of squatting on cage-bottoms.

W. OSBALDESTON.

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### BREEDING EXPERIENCES.

SIR,—Thinking that the experiences of a fellow-aviculturist may be interesting to some of your readers, I venture to give briefly some results of the last breeding season.

To begin with, my Snowy Owls, a pair, brought from Norway in 1891, went to nest last summer for the first time; five eggs were laid, and when the female began to sit the male stood sentry during the whole period of incubation, but was never seen to go on to the nest except to take food to his mate. Two young were presently seen in the nest—a hole scratched in the floor of the covered part of the aviary. Whether the other eggs were broken, or whether young were hatched from them but became dried up and unrecognisable by the time it became possible to clean out the refuse round the nest, was never ascertained. Two young were, however, partly reared, and though one went wrong and died, the other survived and is now strong and vigorous. The parents, up to now (Jan. 21), have not molested

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(*b*) Thank you; your bird was likewise a Resplendent Whydah.—R.P.



their offspring, but, of course, as the breeding season approaches, it will be necessary to part them.

Of Waterfowl, the following species nested: *Geese*—Bean and White-fronted, but the eggs of each proved clear. *Ducks*—three Eider Ducks laid clutches of eggs, and three young Eider Ducklings were hatched under a hen, of which two died when the size of a Teal, apparently overcome by the sun one very hot day; one, a female, survived and is doing well.

Young of Mandarin, Carolina, Common Shelduck, Wigeon, Red-crested Pochard, and Tufted-duck were successfully reared. Two clutches of eggs, laid by a Carolina duck mated with a Mandarin drake, proved unfertile, as has been the case on several other occasions. I have lately heard of an instance, in a neighbouring county, where a hybrid between these species was hatched and reared up to the first moult. Some half-a-dozen years ago, one of my full-winged Mandarin ducks paired with a full-winged Carolina drake, and nested in the hollow bough of a tall elm tree; five young were hatched under a hen, and at the end of a fortnight were thriving, but were all lost in one day through the unfortunate neglect of the person in charge.

Wigeon, Pochards, Tufted-ducks, and Gadwalls are all established here, breeding freely and, except in hard weather, supporting themselves—the offspring of pinioned pairs turned down. The Gadwalls, unfortunately, have a way of nesting in the covers away from the water, and the sitting ducks get woefully thinned by foxes. This spring there was only one Gadwall duck about, with several drakes, and I could not find that there was a nest.

My Whooper Swans made a nest, or rather the male did—a fine bird which I obtained when in the grey plumage of the first year. The female was a recent acquisition, and not in very good condition when the breeding season commenced. It was very curious to see the male steal on to the nest in the mornings, and most carefully go through the pantomime of covering up the egg that the female was supposed to have laid—so at least we interpreted his proceedings. As a matter of fact, the female never appeared to feel any interest in the nest; but I hope to have better results this year.

My Pin-tailed Sandgrouse (two pairs) laid several clutches of their beautiful eggs, but owing, I think, to the excessive looseness of the soil in their aviary, the sand fell in on the eggs and filled up the scratches, which are made rather deep, and the bird each time gave up incubating. (In 1897 we reared a fine young female of this species). A pair of Black-breasted Sandgrouse laid three clutches of three eggs each, but each time the eggs were cracked, the blame being laid at first upon a Rock Thrush, then upon some Pratincoles, until the male Grouse was found to be the real delinquent. As in this family the male bird takes his share of incubation, in the case of the Pin-tailed species at any rate, regularly going on to the nest for the night, it would be impossible to divide the birds after the eggs were laid, and I am at a loss to know what plan to adopt in case the same thing occurs this next season.

A pair of Cornish Choughs, which I have had for five or six years, made their usual nest in a box, but though both birds seemed to take the greatest interest in the proceedings, and the nest was well constructed of birch twigs, and carefully lined with the hair of an old grey pony, no eggs were laid. I am now allowing the birds to live practically at liberty in the

hope that the exercise, and the animal food which they are able to pick up while at large, may lead to better results.

Of smaller birds, of which I have no great number, three young Parrot-finches were reared, as I have already reported in the Magazine. Six young Red-headed Gouldian Finches were hatched, but, owing to the unaccountable death of their parents, perished. My disappointment was to some extent lessened by the fact that, through this mishap, an interesting account of the curious mouth-decoration of these callow nestlings was communicated by Dr. Butler to the December number of the Magazine. My female Rock Thrush very unluckily slipped out of the aviary-door, just as she was at the point of going to nest; and, being hunted away by a pair of Starlings who had a nest close by, I never was able to recover her.

Several young were hatched, and two or three reared, of the rare *Columba laurivora*, from the Canary Islands. A pair of Diamond Doves also nested, but several clutches of eggs were destroyed by a pair of Parson-birds confined with them; and after I placed them in another aviary one young one was partly reared, but, as often happens in confinement, the parents went to nest again too soon, and the young one, not being able to feed itself, perished, in spite of the charitable attentions of a cock Painted Quail—who, although he could not feed it, was seen to brood the young Dove on the floor of the aviary, when it was deserted by the old ones.

W. H. ST. QUINTIN.

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#### A WEASEL, IN THE AVIARY.

SIR,—One morning in the last week of November I noticed some Quail feathers on the ground of the aviary. One of my Quails was missing, and appearances indicated that it had been killed and dragged into an artificial burrow originally constructed for Shelduck. Here was an enigma. The wire netting is three-quarter-inch, with half-inch round the bottom; and I could not find any hole in the ground through which an enemy could have intruded. No rat could have obtained an entrance, and I could only conclude that a weasel had climbed up the wire and squeezed through the three-quarter netting. Being satisfied as to the nature of the culprit, and also as to his whereabouts, I arranged for his capture. The first thing to do was to clear out and square the mouth of the hole, and set a Brailsford trap before it in such a manner that the little wretch could not easily leave the hole without passing through the trap. A strong tool was then worked down to the wooden roof of the burrow, and bumped on it for a short time. Although the inmate must have been thoroughly frightened he remained indoors. I then went away, and within half-an-hour found a very small weasel in the trap—he quickly met death by drowning. Needless to say I was well satisfied to have escaped with the loss of a single bird. The moral is, when building an aviary with wire netting do not use a larger mesh than half-inch.

CHAS. LOUIS HETT.

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#### THE WILD CANARY.

SIR,—I have lately bought a bird from a dealer described as a Wild Canary from the Canary Islands. It is very like an ordinary Green Canary

in colour and shape, but has not the same call-note as the domesticated Canary. It is also not a Citral- nor a Serin-finch. Is there any other finch in the Canary Islands very like a Wild Canary ?

C. HARRISON.

*The following reply was sent to Mr. Harrison :—*

Your bird must be a Wild Canary if it came from the Canary Islands ; as, unless *Serinus icterus* has been introduced into the islands, it is the only Serin found there, and you would be certain to recognize the Green Singing-finch. The Wild Canary is smaller than the domesticated bird, with the exception of the smaller Hartz-mountain Rollers.

A. G. BUTLER.

#### A FEATHER-EATING PARROT.

SIR,—I should be glad to know if anyone has had to deal with a case of feather-eating in Parrots. I have known plenty of cases of picking and nibbling, but never a case in which the feathers were *eaten* before.

It has happened with a hen *Nymphicus uvæensis*, and was begun in the aviary. The bird was so ragged in September, that I thought the weather out of doors was perhaps too cold for the reproduction of its feathers, and brought it in. But it has taken some time to find out the cause. I have never seen the bird at it, but at last, finding wing- and tail-feathers disappearing, I asked if any feathers were found on the bottom of the cage ? On being assured there were none, there could be no longer any doubt that the bird was eating them. I don't know whether anyone can suggest a cure. The bird has plenty of wood to destroy. I am trying sulphur in its sop, but I think I shall spray with quassia solution instead of giving the bird its bath.

F. G. DUTTON.

#### AVIARY NOTES.

SIR,—I am afraid I cannot give any very satisfactory reply to Miss Ashford's enquiry regarding the Avadavat which I bred. The bird proved to be a hen : and as I had two other hens at the time, and have since lost two from egg-binding, I cannot say whether the survivor is my young bird or not, though I am inclined to think that it is. With regard to the time of attaining adult plumage : it had not done so completely within three months (though Dr. Russ says that the beak should be red in about eight weeks), but unfortunately I made no very exact notes on this point at the time.

Though my experience of the Crimson Finch agrees, to a large extent, with that of Mr. Farrar, I should hesitate to count on the amiability of this species against the general opinion of aviculturists. Certainly my bird has never done more than slightly spar at times with his associates (which are all rather larger than himself), but he will not endure the presence of a female of his own kind. I have ceased to attempt to provide him with a wife.

I have had a Madagascar Weaver, for about three years, in an aviary with many other Weavers, including several species of his own size, and I

have never seen him molest them. For two years there was a Comoro Weaver in the aviary, and these two quarrelled constantly in a nagging sort of way; last autumn, however, matters came to a crisis and the Comoro was killed.

I can entirely confirm what Mr. Fillmer says regarding the Pintail Nonpareil. Rather more than two years ago I bought six individuals; of these five died within two months, in spite of paddy rice, but the survivor I have still in perfect health, and he has never given me a moment's anxiety; he appears to subsist mainly on Canary seed. Undoubtedly these birds require very careful treatment when they first arrive, and should, perhaps, be kept rather warm, but when once acclimatised they seem to be hardy enough.

I should like to know what is the general experience as to the hardiness of the Indigo Finch: I mean as to whether it will endure the winter in an open-air aviary in this country? In its native country it appears always to migrate to a warmer climate in the winter, but I have never observed the bird to show any desire to migrate here. My own experience is that it will do well enough if deprived of all green food during the cold season; in an aviary with a small grass lawn I have twice lost it from scouring in the winter, but in another which has nothing but gravel it survived. Another cause of delicacy is, perhaps, the very early season at which the bird assumes its summer plumage, mine is already coming into colour; during this change it must naturally be susceptible to inclement weather. On the whole it is, perhaps, safest under cover in the winter. I find the Nonpareil far hardier and, by the way, far more inclined to breed, though for some reason or other mine never get to the point of hatching their eggs.

I had great hopes of young Diuca Finches this year; but my pair were in a rather crowded aviary, and one morning I found the eggs thrown out and broken, with almost fully-formed young birds inside. The Diuca is very fond of cold potato, it is the first thing that they pick out of the saucer of soft food every morning; they do not seem to care for fruit.

The question of providing fruit for Tanagers in the winter is rather a serious one, if it be considered that only tropical fruits are suitable; I find, however, that apples serve the purpose perfectly well, all my Tanagers take to them readily. On the whole, however, I doubt the necessity of fruit; I have kept my birds (Scarlet, Superb, Sayaca and Black Tanagers) for months together without fruit of any kind and never noticed them to be in the slightest degree the worse for it, but they always have potato in their food-mixture.

R. A. TODD.

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#### "NOTES ON CAGE BIRDS."

SIR,—I quite agree with you: several of my letters to the *Bazaar* which were fully signed have only my initials in the reproduction, notably p. 172 *re* Bengals, Masked Parrakeets, pp. 178 and 179, and other birds on pp. 180, 181 and other pages. I was much disappointed not to know the names of the contributors to the *Bazaar* who have given their experiences. All letters I have written for the Press have been fully signed, and Dr. Greene ought not to have suppressed them in "Notes on Cage Birds."

EDWIN J. POYSER, F.Z.S.



## DRIED FLIES.

SIR,—In the December number you gave your experience of your birds' non-appreciation of dried flies when mixed with other food, and their refusal of it when given by itself.

Some time ago one of our members wrote about dried flies, and I wrote him for the address of the vendor; on his reply I wrote for some. The bag was put in a corner of the dining-room, and I had forgotten about it, when there arose a most dreadful smell of stale fish. Until the little Blenheim Spaniel had scented "game" and scratched the bag over, I could not make out where the smell came from. It proved to be the dried flies. Can they be collected from fish in a state of decomposition? (*c*).

Only keeping Waxbills and small Finches, I have given the flies in a dry state. On my leaving home for three weeks, a couple of seed-glasses were filled, and on my return they were empty. Whether the flies had been eaten, or partly eaten and wasted, like birds will do at times in throwing out their seed, I can't say. To those who have an outdoor aviary, where the smell would not be so objectionable, they could be added for change of diet, but for cage-birds the smell would always be a drawback.

As a substitute for insects, when they are unattainable, in my opinion there is no food to equal Abraham's preserved yolk of egg, which I have used for twenty years; but when he first sent it out it was labelled "Hofmeier's."

W. T. CATLEUGH.

## MADAGASCAR WEAVER.

SIR,—Your foot-note to my letter on the Madagascar Weaver in the January number raises a question on which I should be glad to have the experience of other members. I mentioned that the one I have had now close upon two years killed another which was out of health, this constituting it, in your opinion, a dangerous companion for other birds. I am afraid I conveyed a wrong impression in using the word "killed," I should have been more precise in saying "harried it to death." It must be remembered that the two birds were at the time in a cage only 30 × 16 ins. One was the perfection of health, the second a newly-bought one which turned out to be only in feeble health, otherwise it might have withstood the persecution of its companion.

But the question I wish to ask is—Is it not a common experience that birds, especially males, are often unkind to, and intolerant of, ailing members of their own species? During my first six months of bird-keeping, I had all my birds in a large cage in a living-room and, of course, watched them intently every day, and our attention was soon directed to the heartless treatment accorded by a strong healthy Common Weaver to his ailing little spouse, which he would not allow to nestle on a perch for long without giving it an ill-natured peck. Some of us positively wept when our first bird-victim succumbed like a little martyr. Alas, a cold heap of feathers is now tossed into the garden with scarcely a sigh. Later on, we

(*c*) The insects have nothing whatever to do with fish; their similar life seems to give them a similar smell, which undoubtedly is extremely unpleasant.—A.G.B.

Is not the smell caused by the small fish to be found in considerable numbers mixed with the dried flies?—ED.

observed the same intolerant behaviour amongst the Nuns towards a Bronzewing that went blind on one side, from a warty growth, and which I drowned out of compassion.

Standing one day by one of the immense outdoor aviaries in the Antwerp Zoo, containing between three and four hundred Cardinals, I saw a crested cock flop on to the floor evidently in a dying condition; and as it lay panting and gasping, a lot of the other robust villains felt it incumbent upon them to call and give it a cuff and a kick, metaphorically speaking. I could multiply examples, but will not occupy unnecessary space.

My Madagascar is living peaceably in a cage with smaller Weavers not of its own species, and I would trust it with Waxbills in the extended space of an aviary.

A. A. PEARSON.

### RUFIOUS-NECKED WEAVER.

SIR,—Can anyone tell me to what family the Atlas Finch belongs, and if it is foreign or British? It is a large bird, as big as the Skylark, and has a powerful horny beak that suggests caution in placing it with smaller birds, and prominent nostrils almost as conspicuous as the white saucers round a Zosterops' optics. Head black, merging into coffee-colour on the nape; breast, etc. saffron-yellow, and back mottled yellow and black; iris, red. Very wild, flings itself about madly when anyone approaches the cage, and utters a harsh frightened chirp if they stay too long. Likes a cold bath, and a pair of mealworms placed on the cage-bottom vanish before you realize what has happened (*d*).

A. A. PEARSON.

### ORANGE AND CRIMSON BISHOPS.

SIR,—Are Orange Weavers liable to be scarlet, and are there any two dealers, excepting one or two well-known experts, who call the same Weaver by the same name except the comprehensive one of Bishop?

I sent to a Northern dealer for a Crimson Bishop, which, from information kindly supplied by Mr. Fillmer, I hoped would be the Crimson-crowned Weaver. When it arrived it had a jet-black head and abdomen, with a brilliant scarlet chest and throat, the red feathers extending round the back of neck like a ruffle; wing-coverts a brownish red. Size, nearly as big as a Madagascar.

Previously, I sent to a Southern dealer for an Orange Bishop, which proved to be exactly similar, except that it was much smaller and the scarlet feathers replaced by bright orange. It is very quiet, while the red one is extremely vivacious.

I wrote the Northern dealer, telling him he must have sent a Grenadier Bishop; to which he replied that he had sent me "an Orange Bishop, sometimes called a Crimson;" that the "Grenadier Weaver was yellow and black, also called the Napoleon Bishop"!!

(*d*) This is not the true Atlas Finch, which is the Combason. The bird is the Rufous-necked Weaver.—A.G.B.

I would like to know what my bird really is. I have kept Napoleons almost from the first (e).

A. A. PEARSON.

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*SYCALIS ARVENSIS.*

SIR,—With reference to an advertisement of wild Canaries, I wrote to the advertiser, and in reply he says they are some which he bought from Cross and which were said to have been imported from South America. I don't suppose the true wild Canary is found in South America, but I thought possibly the birds might have been taken there from the Canary Islands and then shipped to England.

The advertiser describes them as follows: "The cocks are dark green on the back with still darker markings, the breast is a greenish yellow getting to a deeper yellow under the throat, also a streak of yellow from the beak to the eye. Their call-note is more like that of a Siskin, but in build they are like the ordinary Green Canary and, of course, smaller."

Will you kindly let me know whether the above description points to the birds being some finch known to belong to South America, or to their being true wild Canaries.

C. HARRISON.

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*The following reply was sent to Mr. Harrison :*

The wild Canary of South America is the Saffron-finch (*Sycalis flaveola*) ; but your birds are, I have no doubt, *Sycalis arvensis*. In the description of the latter species in the British Museum Catalogue, we read,—“lores and feathers below the eye pale yellow, surmounted by a streak of bright golden yellow”: this answers to what you describe as—“a streak of yellow from the beak to the eye.” Dr. Sharpe's description of the back differs a little from yours, but he says,—“All the males in the British Museum appear to be in *seasonal or winter plumage*, or else the ashy shade which pervades the general aspect of the bird is an additional specific character.” According to him the base of the forehead is yellow, the remainder of the crown and nape ashy-olive-yellow streaked with blackish; remainder of upper parts olive-yellowish-brown shading into ashy-olive-greenish on the lower back and rump; the feathers broadly streaked with blackish: his description of the under parts answers tolerably well to yours, only he says the abdomen is rather brighter yellow than the throat (or possibly he may mean than the breast, which he describes as ashy).

Putting a liberal construction on the two descriptions, Dr. Sharpe's differs from yours chiefly in the fact that he notes a sub-tint of brown in the colouring of the mantle.

A. G. BUTLER.

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(e). It is the Grenadier Weaver: these birds are orange when young, but gradually become more crimson with age.—A.G.B.

## THE PROPOSED LICENSING OF BIRD-CATCHERS.

The Society for the Protection of Birds has under consideration the advisability of initiating a movement having for its object the placing of greater restrictions upon bird catching. Acting under instructions from the Executive Committee of our Society, I have informed the Hon. Sec. of the Society for the Protection of Birds that we should be pleased to co-operate with her Society in the matter, and I find that they would be glad if we could formulate some scheme. Suggestions from members are, therefore, invited.

It is desirable that, in the event of there being legislation upon the subject, it should take such a form as will not unduly hamper the capture and sale, under suitable conditions, of such birds as are adapted for captivity; while at the same time ensuring that the birds captured shall be kept under conditions more in accordance with humanity than those which exist at present. It is obvious that respectable bird-dealers have nothing to fear from such a movement—in fact their position and profits would probably be improved by registration.

HORATIO R. FILLMER.

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THE AGES TO WHICH BIRDS ATTAIN IN  
CONFINEMENT.

By E. G. B. MEADE-WALDO.

There is an exceedingly interesting paper in the January number of the *Ibis*, by Mr. J. H. Gurney, on this subject, which seems to me to be one that might be advanced by members of the Avicultural Society. Authentic ages of the smaller passerine birds would be of great value. Many large birds attain to great ages, notably the Eagles, their kin, and the Owls; while many water-fowl, Geese, Pelicans, and Ducks seem to live nearly as long. The Parrots are credited with living a very long time, and, as they are very largely kept, many great ages might be recorded: 80, 64, and 54 seem, however, to be the greatest ages that careful research could produce.

The question naturally arises—Do birds in confinement live longer than in a wild state? It is, of course, impossible to answer this, but I should be inclined to think that, under favourable conditions of food and surroundings, they would. For, as birds get old, they are beaten by the vigorous younger members of their species in the competition for mates; and this does not, as a rule, occur in confinement; where it can occur, I have often seen that the older birds have to “go under.” Many solitary birds, those that have no opportunity of ever nesting, are, undoubtedly, among the longest lived: while birds that breed regularly do not, as a rule, live so very long. (I do not include among these the birds of prey). The oldest authentic breeding pair of small passerine birds with which I am acquainted, are a pair of Trumpeter Bullfinches (*E. githaginea*) which I have at present. I caught them myself, on Feb. 24th, 1888, in the Island of Fuertaventura. The pair in question were then particularly brilliant in colouring, perfectly different from anything ever seen in confinement or in a skin—for the beautiful rose

colour fades almost at once. They were, therefore, probably an old pair, but could not have been less than one year old. They bred, at intervals, in both Mr. St. Quentin's aviary and in mine until 1897, when they must have been ten years old; then they suddenly took it into their heads to go ahead in a most amazing manner. They had four nests and reared no less than *twenty-two* young ones, hatching every egg and rearing each young—this latter operation being rendered much easier for the parents, by the young of each nest going up and feeding their younger brethren, while in the nest and after they had left. I saw the young do it while still being fed themselves by the parents! This last summer the old pair only had one nest and reared three young ones, and lost an albino which was drowned in a thunder-shower after it left the nest. I distinctly see what I consider to be signs of age in the old hen: she did not moult out so cleanly as she ought to do, and she looks dull.

Another old bird here, is a female Canarian Laurel Pigeon, *Columba laurivora*, which I took from the nest in 1888, in the Island of Gomera. She has laid a great number of eggs, and reared a number of young ones for two years, while she had a husband to her taste. Since she lost him she will have nothing to say to any of her sons. She lives at perfect liberty with some others of her own species, but still keeps absolutely tame. It is most amusing to see her stand up to a male Great Bustard, and flick at his head when he is eating.

Pigeons, however, live to great ages, no doubt: 28½ years is recorded in Mr. Gurney's list, and I have a cock Nicobar Pigeon that was very old when I first got him—eleven years ago. He is in most perfect vigour still, as anyone may see in the Western Aviary in the Zoological Gardens where he is temporarily deposited.

This question of the ages of birds seems so interesting that I hope members of the Society may be induced to record any that seem to them sufficiently important, and not to forget to mention the conditions and feeding of the individuals under notice.

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## PARROT NOTES.

By the Hon. and Rev. F. G. DUTTON.

*Continued from page 46.*

AMAZONS (*Continued*).

The next class of Amazons (*i. e.*, the medium sized) contains some of the best talkers, not only amongst Amazons, but amongst Parrots.

The largest of them—one almost large enough to go into the first class—is the Golden-naped Amazon, *Chrysotis auro-palliata*. This bird is certainly larger than Levaillant's. Its size, according to the British Museum Catalogue, is 14 inches total length, wing 9 inches, tail 4.7 inches; as against 15 inches total length for *C. farinosa*, 16 inches for *C. bouqueti*, 19 inches for *C. augusta*, and 17 inches for *C. guildingi*. Its colour is green, but the head, upper tail-coverts, and under parts are much lighter. Its distinctive marks—by which one can always know it—are the black hairy feathers round the nostrils. These are seen in the young, whereas the golden nape is not only missing in the young, but sometimes never appears at all. Whether this has anything to do with sex I do not know, but I certainly think that a very pronounced yellow nape bespeaks a cock bird. The bird is a quick learner if it be taken young, but I cannot say that I believe in Amazons caught old learning to talk. I have only once seen a Grey Parrot which never said a word, but I have seen several Golden-napes and Double-fronts which never did. But get a young Golden-nape, and I incline to think you will find it quite as clever as the Double-fronted.

But they differ in powers of learning. They are not very common, and particularly not the young ones, so that I have not had experience of more than three or four. One I bought, ready taught, from France: it said the usual French sentences and was sold as singing a song, but that it did not do. I do not think it learnt anything fresh when with me, but I am not able to give much time to the birds, so that is not much proof that it would not learn. Then I bought two at Jamrach's some three years ago. There were some seven young ones, and I picked out two, which I looked on as cock and hen. Whether they were so or not, I do not know; but the one I set down as the cock learnt much more quickly than the other, and as all my experience goes to show that as a rule sex does make a great difference in a bird's talking powers, I believe that I had picked out a cock and hen. But my best talker came to an untimely

end : I let them both out, and after two or three days they came back to the garden. I had to be away all day, and when I came back at evening, only the hen, which was the shyest, was to be seen. I caught her and never heard any more of the other, but I have reason to suppose it fell a victim to a stone-throwing boy. But, like all Amazons, these birds, though not screamers, are noisy. Still, I conclude by saying that if anyone wants a talking Parrot, they will not go far wrong if they can buy a young Golden-nape.

The Double-fronted Amazon, as dealers call *Chrysotis levaillanti*, needs no one to sing its praises. It is universally allowed to be one of the best talkers amongst Parrots. It hardly needs description : it is about the size of a Pigeon, and is easily distinguished by its white beak and white feet. Still, there is another Amazon, *Chrysotis ochroptera*, which has a white beak and white feet, and the yellow head of the Double-fronted. But the two may easily be known apart : first, by the smaller size of *C. ochroptera* ; secondly, by its yellow shoulder-buttocks ; and thirdly, by its having its feathers edged with black.

There is almost as great a difference between the plumage of different specimens of *C. levaillanti*, as between different specimens of the common Blue-fronted. Variegated, or "King" birds, as the dealers call them, are not so common ; but some have very little yellow on their heads, and some have the whole head yellow. Those that I have seen of this latter sort were morose birds and non-talkers. I suspect they were of great age and had been caught old. I would warn everyone against buying an old bird if they want a talker ; I am persuaded that they never learn when caught old. But get a young bird and there is nothing you may not teach it. The best Parrot I ever had, or probably ever shall have, was a Double-fronted I picked up at Brest. It sang seven songs, did the French military exercises, said other things and swore like a sailor, and did it all when I told it. There was, however, one peculiarity about it, and that was it never learnt anything fresh. I had it only about a year and then it died, poor thing ! of cancer on the brain, but it never learnt a word of English. It was not at all noisy, and admirably good-tempered. I had to hold it during a painful operation, but it bore me no malice. But though a bird like that is one in a million, I would still say—If you want to start a Parrot, and teach it yourself, write to a dealer and tell him to be on the look-out for a young one for you, and get it with as yellow a cap as you can. I cannot too often repeat that sex makes all the difference in talking in every race of Parrots except the Greys,



and even in those the exceptional talkers are probably cocks. Of course you must know how to distinguish a young bird, unless you know a dealer whom you can trust.

Amazons, however, have their drawbacks over and above their noisiness, of which they are more easily broken than Greys are of screaming—they are much more jealous, and more uncertain. Greys are sometimes jealous, and I have had cock birds that were quite good-tempered till another was put with them, and then would bite; but Amazons can never be trusted when another Parrot is by, whether the other Parrot be an Amazon or not. And an Amazon may bite you when you see no reason at all for it. “Pomeranian dogs,” say some, “are uncertain.” “No,” I always reply, “not all. They are certain to bite you, or certain to leave you alone.” But that is not the case with an Amazon. He may be sitting on your hand in a perfectly good temper, apparently, and suddenly give you a good bite. I do not think the hens are subject to jealousy, so that if a bird shows jealousy you may hope you have a cock bird.

In concluding this article, I may say that as I recognise the difficulty to a beginner in knowing how to distinguish a young bird, or how to set about getting the Parrot he wants, I am quite ready to help any member of our Society with advice, if he likes to write to me.

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## TOUCANS.

By W. OSBALDESTON.

These birds, up to within the last few years, have been rarely seen by the average aviculturist. A few were to be found at the Zoos, but except for their novelty they excited little interest. Those which, from time to time, found their way to the dealers' shops offered little inducement towards the cultivation of a closer acquaintance, being generally in a rough and almost naked condition, and fed upon dirty, sloppy food. But a good many specimens have been imported of late years, and I have had about ten different species—they have almost all arrived with cut wings, which makes them look stunted, stupid and far from pleasing.

When once moulted in a good sized cage or aviary, and fed upon a suitable diet, they become very ornamental and desirable birds. It is true they have no song, only a croak, but this deficiency is made up for by their affection for their feeders and caretakers, the gorgeous hues of their feathers, and the beautiful transparent tints of their lobster-claw-like mandibles, which, by

the way, are more formidable in appearance than in reality. They can, however, give you an ugly tear by getting hold with the point of the bill and, by a dexterous movement, twisting the flesh round—this will cause a wound like that from a severe pinch, which is apt to fester.

Toucans are very clean birds, and are extremely fond of water. They like a good syringe immensely, but care must be taken that they do not get a chill while drying. Being very sparsely feathered they will not stand severe cold—they lack the down under the feathers possessed by many birds, notably by the Parrots—and 50° is the lowest temperature in which they should be kept to insure their remaining in good condition; although mine have stood for months a temperature of only 40° in an unheated aviary, but at such a low temperature they do not care to bathe, or preen themselves if syringed, and therefore get grimy-looking and mopey.

I prefer the larger species, as they are, as a rule, more brilliantly coloured and are more docile and attached to their keepers.

I feed my Toucans on a mixture composed of yolk of egg, ants' eggs, grocers' currants, various seeds ground down, mixed together with pea meal, put into a warm oven with syrup. They get to like this well, and it will keep any length of time. I add beef dripping to this mixture as required for use, and give it to all my soft-bills. Occasionally I give the Toucans soaked currants as a tit-bit—they like these and swallow them as if they were pills. They are very fond of grapes—the larger Toucans will swallow them whole like the currants, tossing them up with the end of the bill and catching them in the open gape, when they go down at one gulp. The smaller Toucans generally break or cut them in two before finally disposing of them. They like bananas cut up fine, also apples and pears. Mealworms they will take from the hand—but I hardly think these are suitable food for fruit-eating birds such as Toucans.

I consider Toucans pleasing, affectionate, and very attractive birds—but above all things they must be kept clean. Sawdust is the best thing for the bottom of the cage.

If the food and water be placed on the level of the perches they do not often leave them to get on the bottom of the cage—but they should be supplied with at least two perches, so that they may hop from one to the other for exercise.

When asleep they look very peculiar, with the tail perpendicular, the head and bill buried in the feathers on the back, and the body squatted on the perch.

# THE CRYSTAL PALACE SHOW OF 1899.

## BRITISH BIRDS.

So far as numbers were concerned, the British Birds at the recent Palace Show were well up to the mark, and the task of judging can have been no easy one. There was, however, nothing particularly rare, or of very special interest.

The Bullfinch class contained no less than seventy-four entries: a truly grand array of crimson-breasts, but a most difficult class to judge. The bird that received the first prize was by far the largest British Bullfinch I have seen, if, indeed, it was a genuine John Bull, which some sceptical visitors to the Show were half inclined to doubt. The second prize winner was a truly lovely specimen, and so, in fact, were many in this class, in which seven prizes were given.

Excellent as were the Bullfinches, both in quality and number, the Goldfinches were even better. No less than eighty-two specimens were exhibited, and seven prizes were given. Mr. Job Williams is the owner of the first-prize winner, and he may be congratulated on possessing one of the most perfect Goldfinches that is ever likely to grace the Show-bench. The second in order of merit ran the first decidedly close, but there could be no question as to which was the best bird of the two.

There was nothing to call for special remark about the Chaffinches. The best bird was No. 1,488, belonging to Mr. McInroy, which I believe received the first prize, although, by some mistake, it was marked V. H. C. in the Catalogue.

Linnets formed a good class, numbering no less than sixty-nine specimens. The first-prize winner, belonging to Mr. H. D. Hart, was a beautifully-shaped bird.

There were twenty-four entries in the class for Lesser Redpolls and Twites. A very nice Twite, belonging to Mr. Lowne, received the first prize. Siskins numbered thirty-one entries, amongst which were some very beautiful birds, many of which were, however, colour-fed. Mr. Frostick's exhibit, which received the first prize, was perhaps slightly the best bird, although several others ran it remarkably close.

Next came the class for "Any other variety of Resident Finch," which was chiefly composed of Hawfinches and Yellowhammers; there were, however, also a few other nice birds, notably one or two Cirl-buntings, a Reed-bunting, and a Snow-bunting, which can scarcely be called a resident. There were also two or three Greenfinches, a Corn-bunting, and two House

Sparrows, one of which, a hen, was catalogued as a "Tree Sparrow." The first prize went to a very neat Hawfinch belonging to Mr. Lowne.

In the class for Larks and Pipits, Messrs. Kilbury Bros.' Skylark received the first prize, for the sixth time at the Palace. A very beautiful Shorelark, the property of Mr. Parker Robinson, came second; and a delightful Woodlark, belonging to Mr. Frostick, third. There were also one or two nice Tree Pipits and Meadow Pipits.

There were some charming birds amongst the Robins, several of which sang beautifully during the Show. I liked No. 1,711 best, but it was overlooked entirely by the Judge.

Some splendid Blackbirds were shown; "Zulu Prince," the winner of the first prize, is as good a Blackbird as I remember to have seen. Another very tame and charming specimen (No. 1,736) was shown by Mr. B. H. Wilson, but it should have been in a cage painted white, instead of dark green, inside.

There were thirty-three Song-thrushes, many of which sang beautifully during the exhibition. Starlings were not particularly well represented, but there were some very charming birds present, many of which chattered away as merrily as ever a Starling chattered upon a house-top.

Mr. Fulljames' Chough was easily at the top of the class for "Magpies, Jackdaws, Jays, and Choughs;" but the second-prize winner, Messrs. Kilbury Bros.' Magpie "Sirdar," was a truly magnificent bird, and an excellent talker and mimic. The third prize was won by a Jay belonging to Mr. T. Blower. Mr. Housden's Chough appeared to me to be a hen.

The class for abnormally coloured specimens of British birds is always interesting, and on this occasion was well up to the average. First came Mr. Fulljames' Cinnamon Starling, a most beautiful bird which has before been mentioned in our Magazine. The second prize went to a very differently coloured bird of the same species—its entire plumage being of a beautiful silver-grey tint. A very pretty Bullfinch came third—an albino with a very delicate pink tint on the cheeks.

Other interesting "freaks" were, two pure white House Sparrows, a black Bullfinch, a cinnamon Chaffinch, and a white Thrush.

Next came the class for any other variety of the smaller insectivorous residents. The first prize was awarded to a Tree-creeper sent by Mrs. W. H. Field; it did not look particularly happy, but it was uncommon as a Show bird, and therefore, I



suppose, worth a first prize. The second prize went to a nice Wren belonging to Mr. Maxwell. The third prize was given to a Nuthatch. A beautiful little Marsh-tit was sent by Messrs. F. and R. Howe, which did not receive a card of any description and was marked "Absent" in the Catalogue. It was one of the nicest birds in the class. A very beautiful pair of Bearded-tits, in splendid plumage, were also entirely overlooked by the Judge. There were three Long-tailed-tits, a Great-tit, and a Blue-tit exhibited, as well as a Pied, and a Grey, Wagtail.

In the class for larger insectivorous residents, a very nice Missel Thrush took the first prize. The winner of the second was the Greater-spotted Woodpecker which took the first prize in this class at the October Show. There were three Greater-spotted Woodpeckers in this class, curiously enough all hens. The third prize was awarded to a Grey Wagtail, a bird that should have been entered in the previous class, and had no right to compete in a class for birds *larger* than a Woodlark.

The next class contained some very fine Nightingales and Blackcaps, most of which appeared to be in most perfect health and condition.

The class for Insectivorous Migrants contained an interesting collection. A Chiff-chaff received the first prize, which it well deserved. A hen Wheatear in beautiful condition, belonging to Mr. Upton, came second, and the third prize was well earned by a Great Grey Shrike, the property of Mr. W. Cook. Mr. Russell Humphrys exhibited a Pied Flycatcher, a bird not often seen on the Show-bench. Three very nice Red-wings were shown, as well as two good Ring Ouzels, two White-throats, some Yellow Wagtails, and a Redstart.

The Migratory Seed-eaters formed a large class, more than half of which were Bramblefinches. A very good Bramblefinch, belonging to Mr. Fulljames, received the first prize, the second going to a nice Snow Bunting exhibited by Mr. Lowne. An Ortolan came third; and there were also exhibited five Mealy Redpolls and four Crossbills.

The class for European birds not included in the N. B. B. and M. C. List was not very well filled, but contained some very interesting exhibits. Mr. Fulljames' Blue-throat is an exquisite little bird, and was rightly awarded first prize. No second prize was given in this class. The same gentleman's Rock Thrush received the third prize, whilst his Orphean Warbler, a bird well worth the second prize, had to be content with the fourth place. Two novel and interesting exhibits in this class

were a Lapwing and a Sandpiper, neither of which received a card of any description. Not being included in the N. B. B. and M. C. List, these two species, which are as truly British as any birds in the Show, have to go into a class for Continental birds, where the hard-hearted Judge will have nothing to do with them. They were in fine condition, and a great addition to the interest of the exhibition; surely their owner should have received some encouragement. Mr. Russell Humphrys sent a Barred Warbler (*Sylvia nisoria*) but it was sadly out of condition, although a very interesting exhibit. D. SETH-SMITH.

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### FOREIGN BIRDS (OTHER THAN PARROTS).

*Whydahs, Weavers, and Combousos.* This was not a very interesting class—it seldom is at a February Show. There were several specimens of the Long-tailed Whydah, one Red-collared Whydah, and Mr. Fulljames' celebrated Resplendent Whydah, now out of colour—also several commoner species. The first prize went to the Red-collared.

*Common Waxbills.* This class was better filled than at the October Show, but the quality was poor. The first prize was awarded to a pair of Avadavats—the male was very bright, but they were not in the very best condition and appeared to be newly-imported. The second and fourth prizes were awarded to Golden-breasted Waxbills, and the third to Avadavats. Oddly enough, the exhibits in these classes for common birds (in which condition is the only merit) seem usually in much worse condition than those in the classes for rarer birds.

*All other species of Waxbills.* Here were fewer entries than in October, but the class was a fairly good one. The interest centred in Mr. Hawkins' exhibits, which secured the first and third prizes—a single cock being entered as *Pytelia melba* (a) and two females or immature birds as *Pytelia afra*—whether these three birds really belonged to two species I cannot undertake to say. There were two female Violet-eared Waxbills, Crimson Finches, Lavender Finches, Cordon Bleus, an Aurora Finch, and one pair and a single specimen of the Rufous-tailed Finch.

*Gouldian Finches, Parrot Finches, & Pin-tailed Nonpareils.* Here was a good show of both varieties of Gouldian Finches and the common Parrot Finch. There was one pair of Pin-tailed Nonpareils, which received the fourth prize. A Bunting Nonpareil had got into this class by mistake. (By the way, this

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(a) *Zonogastris melba* of the Cat. Birds Brit. Mus.—H. R. F.

was the only "wrong classed" entry in the classes judged by Dr. Simpson, which shews the usefulness of the "notes" in the schedule). The rare birds in this class were the first prize winners, belonging to Mr. Hawkins, and entered simply as "Parrot Finches,"—these were three-coloured Parrot Finches, inasmuch as they had a blue face, a red throat and tail, and a green body, but they were not the species usually called the "Three-coloured Parrot Finch," which is, I believe, *Erythrura trichroa*. I fail to identify these birds with any species in the Cat. Birds Brit. Mus.

*Parson, Diamond, and Zebra Finches.* Here were eleven entries, mostly Parson and Diamond Finches, and, on the whole, a very poor lot.

*All other Grassfinches.* Five entries of Long-tailed Grassfinches, three of Bichen's Finches, and one each of Cherry Finches, Red-headed Finch, and White-eared Grassfinch.

*Java Sparrows* presented nothing of interest.

*All other Mannikins.* A miserable class. Three pairs of Magpie Mannikins, one pair of Bengalese, and a solitary Chestnut Finch.

*Cardinals.* Here again was a poor show. One cock Virginian, two entries of Green Cardinals, and three of Red-crested Cardinals.

*All other species of Grosbeaks, True Finches, and Buntings.* This was a very good class. The first prize was awarded to a Black-headed Siskin, the second to Mr. Seth-Smith's fine pair of *Passer luteus*, the third to a pair of rare Serins belonging to Mr. Frostick, the fourth to a Pileated Finch, and the fifth to an Alario Finch. There was another Black-headed Siskin, two Reddish Finches belonging to Mr. Swaysland, a pair of *Sycalis arvensis* belonging to the same exhibitor, as well as Saffron Finches, Indigo Buntings, Nonpareils, and Green and Grey Singing Finches.

*Tanagers, Sugar Birds, and Zosterops.* The first prize winner was Mr. Townsend's very fine specimen of *Dacnis cayana*, in full male plumage. The second prize went to Mr. Fulljames' Tri-coloured Tanager. The third prize was awarded to Mr. H. B. Smith's Scarlet Tanager. The fourth prize to Mrs. Field's Blue and Black Tanager. The fifth to a very rare and beautiful Tanager belonging to Mr. Fulljames, which might have been higher up. This last-mentioned bird was slightly larger than the Scarlet Tanager, with head and throat slate-blue; mantle black; primaries and tail-feathers blue

edged with black; underparts yellow, divided from the slate-coloured throat by an irregular band of black across the breast; rump yellow; feathers round eyes, and lores, black. There were several other Tanagers, mostly of common species, and two or three *Zosterops* (all of the Grey-backed species).

*Crows, Jays, etc.* First, Mr. Housden's Wandering Tree Pie (*Pies* according to the Catalogue, but there was only one bird in the cage). Second, Mr. Humphrys' amusing Black-throated Grackle. Third, Mr. Fulljames' Crimson-headed Starling. Fourth, Mr. Henderson's Blue Jay. Fifth, Mr. H. B. Smith's Purple-headed Glossy Starling. The class included besides, Andaman, Black-headed, and Malabar Starlings, a Miniature Glossy Starling, Blue-bearded and Blue-hooded Jays, and some Brazilian Hangnests. A very good class.

*Doves and Quails.* Contained a nice pair of Jungle Bush Quails and four entries of Doves. The first prize went to Mr. Housden's Nicobar Pigeons—I suppose strictly a Pigeon is a Dove and a Dove a Pigeon, but these large Pigeons are scarcely what we commonly understand by the word "Dove."

*All other species of Foreign Birds.* This class, which is practically a class for soft-food birds, was at this Show separated from the other soft-billed classes by the Parrots—this would have been avoided if the Parrot classes had been placed first, as they were in October. It was a large class of 23 entries, and needs division. First, Mr. Fulljames' pair of Australian Wood Swallows—rather mopish birds of a sooty-grey colour, with bluish-grey primaries and tail feathers. The bill did not appear to have any of the characteristics of the Swallow. Second, Mr. Humphrys' Great Racquet-tailed Drongo. Third, Mr. Humphrys' Blue-winged Green Bulbul. Fourth, Mr. Fulljames' Green Touraco. Fifth, Mrs. Field's Toucan. The class also comprised a pair of Lewin's Honey-eaters and a pair of Yellow Honey-eaters; no less than three pairs of the Warty-faced Honey-eaters, more curious than beautiful; a Greenish Honey-eater; a Grey-winged Blackbird; an Indian Barbet; a Crimson-crested Touraco, kept out of the prize list by defective claws; another Toucan of a different species from the prize-winner; and several common birds.

One of the most interesting exhibits to the aviculturist was to be found in the Hybrid section. This was Dr. Butler's Canary-Saffron Finch—which has so often been declared to be an impossibility. I examined the bird carefully, and, so far as I could judge, its appearance bore out its reputed ancestry in every respect.

HORATIO R. FILLMER.



## DOVES, PARROTS AND PARRAKEETS.

The class (122) for Doves or Quails is always a failure; probably because few aviculturists have really tame specimens of the genus which they can with safety catch and cage. 1st prize (the only prize awarded) went this year, as last, I think, to Mr. Housden's pair of Nicobar Pigeons; they are in beautiful condition and fine of their kind. Personally, I cannot admire the vulturine look of the species, and have grave doubts as to their being eligible. I certainly thought Mr. Seth-Smith's little pair of Jungle Bush Quails (*Perdicula asiatica*), which are both rare and interesting, worthy of a 2nd if not of 1st prize. Mr. H. B. Smith's cock Bronze-wing (H. C.) is a handsome bird, I should think a Tasmanian one; for it has that excessive ruby brilliance of wing which is found in Tasmanian rather than Australian specimens.

The class for Budgerigars requires little comment. Mr. Arthur's birds, as usual, were striking for their size and condition, so indeed, in a lesser degree, were the other winners.

The class (124) for Rosellas and Pennants was fairly filled. Mr. Arthur's pair of Pennants, 1st, are handsome birds in fine plumage. Mr. Housden's, 2nd, an exceptionally handsome single Pennant. Its companion had unfortunately died just after its arrival at the Show; if it was as good as the survivor they must have taken first honours. The 3rd prize went to Mr. Arthur for a fair Mealy Rosella. I thought Dr. Grigg's V. H. C. pair of Red Rosellas particularly handsome.

Class 125, for King and Crimson-wing Parrakeets, had 10 entries, and was well divided between the two species. 1st was awarded to Mr. Doherty's King and Queen, which, according to the Catalogue, took the same honours in 1896 and 1897. They did not look happy. Kings and Queens seldom do, while many Crimson-wings are bright and lively, and seem quite to enjoy the excitement of a Show. 2nd prize was awarded to a lovely Crimson-wing shown by Mr. Maxwell, and 3rd to another nearly as good, shown by Mr. Doherty.

Class 126, for "All species of Parrakeets not included in the above," was a most varied and interesting one. The entries numbered 23, and two extra prizes were very properly awarded. 1st deservedly was awarded to Mrs. Astrop's beautiful Pileated Parrakeet, which, if I am not mistaken, has before carried off the same honour; 2nd was Mr. Fulljames' charming Princess of Wales Parrakeet (*Polytelis alexandræ*)—its disposition seems to be like its soft colouring. Mr. Maxwell's hen Yellow-shouldered

Parrakeet, lately so well depicted as an illustration in this Magazine, was 3rd—I fear much that her appearance alone means that the cock is either ill or dead. The two extra 3rd prizes went to a lovely pair of Red-mantled Parrakeets shown by Mr. Cocksedge, and to an equally good pair of Blue Bonnets shown by Mr. Fulljames. I failed to find the latter gentleman's entry of a Fiji Shining Parrakeet.

Class 127, "Lories and Lorikeets," were a decidedly good class of 11, for nearly all were in good health and plumage. Mr. Housden's, 1st, Ceram Lory (not, as in the Catalogue, Forsten's Lorikeet) is a great beauty; Mr. Fulljames' 2nd prize bird is a Forsten's; the striking contrast of colour in this species is most attractive. Mr. Maxwell's, 3rd prize, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet is also a very nice specimen. Of the other entries, I think I admired most Mr. Grier's (*b*) V. H. C. Ceram Lory.

128, "Lovebirds, including Hanging Parrots." It is remarkable what a number of Peach-faced Lovebirds are now seen, and all, as a rule, in good condition; ten years ago they were rare. The class almost consisted of them. 1st was awarded to Mr. Fulljames, for a pair of Red-crowned Hanging Parrakeets—last year there were specimens also of the Blue-crowned. Mr. Frostick's 2nd prize, Mr. Storey's 3rd, and Mr. Cooper's V. H. C. were all good pairs of Peach-faced Lovebirds.

129, "Amazons and Greys." A fine class of 17, though fine rather for the general good condition of the exhibits than for the great rarity of any. A handsome Levillant's Amazon, shown by Mrs. Newmarch, took 1st honours; Mr. Hughes' Grey, in lovely condition, 2nd; and Mrs. Cooper's Spectacle Amazon, 3rd. V. H. Commendations were awarded to a good Yellow-fronted Amazon shown by Mr. Hudson, and a Mealy shown by Mr. Woodfield.

Class 130, "All species of Parrot not included in the above," was an interesting class. Mr. Fulljames' 1st and 2nd winners being really rare. The former, a White-headed Parrot, at first sight looked like an Amazon, and I learn was once passed as such by a distinguished judge. It is a *Pionus senilis*; the latter is a Bronze-winged Parrot (*Pionus chalcopterus*). Mr. Maxwell's Hawk-headed Parrot was placed 3rd, and an extra 3rd was most properly awarded to Mr. Fulljames' pair of Meyer's. Several fine *Ectectus* of both sexes appeared.

Class 131. But three Macaws were shown, all of well-

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(*b*). "Grier" was a misprint in the Catalogue. The exhibitor was Mr. Albert Green.—Ed.

known varieties. Mr. Fulljames' winner, a Hyacinthine, is a grand specimen.

Class 132. Cockatoos, were not a good or interesting collection. 1st prize was not awarded; 2nd went to Mr. Housden's cock Leadbeater, and 3rd to Mr. Fulljames' Blood-stained. I wonder what has become of the Gangas shown last year.

On the whole, I have seen better and more interesting Shows of Parrots and Parrakeets; it is remarkable how much of the beauty and interest of the Show depends on the exhibits of about three gentlemen.

O. E. CRESSWELL.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### TO AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS.

SIR,—I do not know whether we have any amateur photographers among our members.

To those among us who follow the "foe-to-graphic-art" I suggest the formation of a postal circulating club, to be mainly for the encouragement of the photographing of caged birds.

A short time ago a photo-engraving of a Hawfinch appeared in the *Feathered World*. This was a good illustration, but spoilt by the presence of the wires in front of the bird. The enclosed photo. (c) shows that the cage-wires need not be apparent.

It seems to be a great pity that good specimens of caged birds should not be invariably photographed, and many of them photo-engraved. Take the illustration last month. I would much sooner have had an uncoloured photo-print than a chromo, the accuracy of which I must take on trust (d). Newly-caged birds or those that have become reconciled to confinement are usually in the best plumage; but some are very bad sitters when freshly-caged. For instance, Chaffinches, Robins, and the usually quiet Hedge Sparrow. A Kingfisher on the attention, which can only be photographed wild under exceptional circumstances, will sit well in a cage. (I am now trying to get one for the purpose). Hawks and Owls are good subjects.

I should be glad to hear from anyone willing to join a Cage-Bird Photo. Club.

CHAS. LOUIS HETT.

### WELLS' GROUND DOVE.

*Leptoptila wellsii*.

SIR,—I was much interested, when reading Mr. O. E. Cresswell's article on his Doves, to come across his description of a species received

(c). This is a faintly printed negative representing two Owls. No wires are visible.—Ed.

(d). We scarcely think that many of our readers will agree with this. It is always acknowledged that uncoloured representations of birds are almost useless for identification.—Ed.

from the Island of Tobago, which lies N. E. of Trinidad and S. E. of Grenada.

In May, 1898, our member, Mr. J. C. Pool, of Birmingham, received a consignment of Doves from Barbados and among them, I think, five examples from Tobago, which were forwarded under the name of *Columba corensis*; all the latter had had their wings more or less clipped and were somewhat rough in feathering. Knowing my liking for Doves, Mr. Pool kindly exchanged a pair of *Zenaida aurita* and the supposed *Columba corensis* for various birds which I had to spare.

I soon discovered that neither of the species to which *C. corensis* is assigned as a synonym answered in the least to my birds, and after looking through the Museum collection of skins of *Columba* I was still at fault.

Looking through Temminck's work, I believed I had spotted the bird on pl. 25 *bis* as the supposed young of *Zenaida aurita*, and turning to the Catalogue I found Count Salvadori's note—'seems to belong to a different species'; so there I was floored again. From that day forward I was no nearer to an identification; for, although one of the birds proved to have been pinioned and will never be able to fly, both remain in excellent health; so that I must eventually have caged one of them and taken it to town for identification. Now, however, I have looked at the solitary Museum skin (said to have come from Grenada) and know my birds to be *Leptoptila welshi*.

I find this one of the most timid Doves with which I have had to do; and, unlike most species of *Columbina*, somewhat irritable; objecting to small birds perching on a branch near it, and running to drive them away: it is softly pleasing, but by no means brilliant, in colouring.

A. G. BUTLER.

#### THE RUFOUS-TAILED GRASSFINCH.

SIR,—I read with much interest and pleasure the article on this pretty finch by Mr. Seth-Smith, which appeared in the February number of the Magazine. The plate represents a *fine* male bird, and I think one I now have in my aviary is about as handsome; but the red marking of the face has been less vivid in several cock birds I have seen on this side of the Channel.

My own experience with these lovely little birds has, unfortunately, been limited to one pair, purchased in November, 1897. The hen was rather delicate from the first, and died when about to lay, last spring. The cock (referred to above) is still in good health and plumage, and wintered in my unheated aviary, but where it never freezes, without any apparent ill effects, this year. Since the loss of the hen, I have not been able to find another of the species to mate with the cock, much to my regret, for he seems most anxious to nest. At the present moment he is rather "sweet" on a hen Australian Crimson-finch (who, by the way, has a brutal partner whose chief occupation is chasing and trying to maltreat her—both the Crimson-finches are aviary-bred), but she resents him and his attentions, and seems to prefer her decidedly brutal mate to the gallant *Ruficauda* and his affections. If she were only slightly inclined to accept his advances, I think I would cage them alone and try the experiment of breeding hybrids, and leave the cock Crimson-finch to himself.



Seeing the difficulty in procuring a hen Rufous-tail, I paired the cock last year with a hen Australian Zebra Finch; and, as they built a nest, laid eggs, and sat well, I was rather hopeful of obtaining the cross. I never had any young, though, and after about a month's steady incubation the eggs (3) were thrown out of the nest and broken; all seemed clear. I should like to know if this cross is considered obtainable. I think I have read, somewhere, Dr. Butler has tried the same experiment, but, if I remember rightly, with opposite sexes to my birds, *i.e.*, hen Rufous-tail, and cock Zebra Finch. I do not remember to have seen the result published; perhaps he would kindly give the information in the Magazine (*e*).

Rufous-tails are certainly scarce this way (France) and, notwithstanding my various applications for a hen, by letters and advertisements, I have not been able to find one since I lost mine. They are, in my opinion, among the best of foreign aviary-finches, and it is peculiar they are so rarely imported.

I regret Mr. Seth-Smith did not succeed in obtaining any young from the pair that nested in his aviary; other amateurs have, unfortunately, met with the same disappointment that he did. The nest they build (in a bush generally) is, in many cases, a flimsy structure, so much so that the eggs frequently fall through it during incubation; and this may explain, to a certain extent, the egg-tasting and eating the species is addicted to. The hen may be the culprit. A friend of mine, who had a pair nesting in a cage, says he saw his hen eating the eggs. The nest they built with him was a slender affair in the green-food rack. In spite of their egg-eating propensity, Rufous-tails have been bred by four amateurs, to my knowledge, in France, and I have had bird-dealings with two of the gentlemen who bred them. One gentleman reared, a few years ago, some fifteen young from several pairs. If I had a pair that laid in a nest too fragile to support the eggs and birds during incubation, I should try to strengthen the nest underneath with hay or some other nesting material; this has been done in this country, and the eggs, in several instances, were saved from falling through the nest and being broken.

I think the first importation of these birds into France was in 1894, which was the year in which they seem to have made their first appearance in England.

A. SAVAGE.

SIR,—In August, 1897, a pair of these birds made a neat domed nest of hay and bents in a tuft of grass in one of my aviaries. Two young left the nest, but succumbed to a wet chilly night two or three days afterwards. They were of a pale brown colour, and were excessively wild, and I could not induce them to remain in the covered part of the aviary, the door of which had to be left open on account of other nesting birds. Unlike Mr. Seth-Smith's birds, my pair offered no hostilities to their aviary companions; even a pair of Cordon Bleus, incubating in a box-bush six feet away, were not interfered with. For some reason, the birds, this last summer, though apparently in the best of health, have not bred: possibly because, hoping to induce them to select a more dry and sheltered site for their nest, I kept the grass-plot cut close.

W. H. ST. QUINTIN.

(*e*). No eggs apparently were laid, but the hen sat in the nest until she somehow managed to tear her abdomen, probably against some projecting point in the wire netting, and died.—A. G. B.

## THE LICENSING OF BIRD-CATCHERS.

SIR,—The proposed action of the Society for the Protection of Birds with regard to the licensing of bird-catchers will, I have no doubt, meet with the approval of all our members who claim to be true naturalists.

All who are acquainted with the extent to which bird-catching is carried on from the first of August onwards, especially around London and along the South Coast, cannot but realise that the imposition of a license upon bird-catchers is sure to result in the increase of our native songsters. The mere licensing of bird-catchers is, however, hardly all that is necessary if we are to long retain the Goldfinch as a British wild bird. There can be no doubt that if this and certain other species are to be saved from extermination the *close time must be extended*. The cultivation of land, which was formerly overgrown with thistles and other weeds, may have had something to do with the thinning of the number of Goldfinches, but I believe the bird-catcher has far the most to answer for in this respect. There are still large tracts of uncultivated land in England where Goldfinches can find sustenance if only the bird-catchers will give them a chance; there are still localities where the cheerful twitter of *Carduelis* may any day be heard but where, year by year, he is becoming scarcer.

It is well known that the Goldfinch is a decidedly late breeder. Every mule-breeder knows well enough that it is practically useless to attempt to breed Goldfinch mules until quite late in the spring, and that cock Goldfinches are often ready enough to go on breeding after most Canaries have commenced the autumnal moult. Thus it is that at the beginning of August, when the bird-catchers commence work, not only are there numbers of young Goldfinches which, although flying, are still dependent upon their parents for food, but many are still actually in the nest. At this time of the year both old and young (but far more of the latter than the former) are readily attracted to the bird-catchers' nets by the call-birds, and are taken in considerable numbers. As before stated, most of the young birds taken at this time of the year are absolutely incapable of feeding themselves, and consequently die from starvation. Even those that are able to eat soft seeds are quite incapable of digesting the hard fare provided by their captors. I have several times conversed with bird-catchers upon this subject, and have pointed out the folly and cruelty of capturing these "grey-pates," as they are called at this stage of their existence, and the bird-catchers have often admitted that 90 per cent. of these young birds are sure to die within a week or so.

The adult birds taken in August very likely have families which cannot exist without them, and which are thus certain to die from starvation.

In my opinion, the only way to preserve the Goldfinch is to extend the close season to the beginning or middle of September; the birds taken after this are perfectly able to feed themselves and there is a good chance of their living. Aviculturists are not, as a rule, over-given to false sentiment, and they do not object to the capture of adult birds that will have a good chance of living and doing well in captivity; but I feel sure that a good many of our members will agree that the capture of young Goldfinches which cannot feed themselves, except, perhaps, upon soft green seeds, and which are practically certain to die of starvation, should be put a stop to, and I do not doubt that if the Society for the Protection of Birds,

which is really doing a most excellent work, will take up this matter, to them will be accorded the hearty sympathy and goodwill of all our members who call themselves bird-lovers.

D. SETH-SMITH.

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#### TRAVELLING-CAGES FOR DOVES—A SUGGESTION.

SIR,—In perusing Mr. Cresswell's interesting article on Doves in last month's Magazine, I note he alludes to the great difficulty in importing the little Barbados 'Turtle Doves (*Chamæpelia passerina*). Would it not be possible to overcome this difficulty by providing padded boxes with false canvas tops, etc., or making a skeleton box, covering it with fine canvas, then putting it in another, allowing, say  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches between top and sides. Of course it would have to be made fast, and the front more or less open.

I have noticed that Quails, imported alive into Leeds market, always come in very shallow crates, not more than 6 inches high and 3 or 4 feet long—they seem to be packed like herrings in a box. This appears to answer, as they look strong and lively.

F. W. OATES.

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#### GRASS-SEEDS FOR WAXBILLS.

SIR,—As it is impossible to tell the varieties of food that foreign birds feed on in their native land, it is one's duty to give the little prisoners change of diet that will be of benefit to them when kept in confinement. Doubtless, grass-seeds of kinds make up for the loss of some of their favourite dainties. Some time ago, in addition to the staple foods of my Waxbills, a grass mixture was added, but it was treated like all seed mixtures—quick turns left and right with the beak, to select the favourite seed, at the expense of a lot wasted.

As some of the grasses had, if I may so express it, "no inside," a careful selection was made of the kinds that had "kernels," or an interior that could be shucked. Out of this "survival of the fittest" I give the names of three or four of the cheapest, the prices varying from 4d. to 8d. per pound.

Meadow Fescue (*Festuca pratensis*).

Timothy (*Phleum pratense*).

Sutton's Dwarf Perennial Rye Grass (*Lolium perenne suttoni*).

Plantain, or Rib Grass, they also seemed to appreciate. Some others of the expensive grasses (such as Dogstail) were highly esteemed, but as the price was 2/6 per pound, they are not mentioned, as the lesser priced seeds answer all the purpose.

To those who have small cages and only room for one sort of grass at a time, a fresh variety can be added daily. In my case the seeds are placed in rows in night-light glasses on a shelf, easily got at from the perch, and each bird seems to have a special liking for a certain grass, and can take his or her choice, and there is but little waste in the feeding.

W. T. CATLEUGH.

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## CRIMSON FINCHES AND RUFOUS-TAILED FINCHES.

SIR,—My experience of Crimson Finches bears out the general opinion. I bought two cocks and a hen in November, 1897. They lived peaceably in a cage by themselves (as I did not put them into my aviary-cage) until last August. There the cocks were always pulling out the hen's tail and maltreating her. I caught her out to let her tail grow in peace, and then the two cocks began fighting furiously. So I put back the hen and took away the most quarrelsome of the cocks. I was never able to put him back, as each time I tried it he flew at the other cock, and I had to interfere at once.

I, therefore, parted with him, and, as the other cock and hen showed nesting desires, I put them in a larger cage with materials for building. The cock soon built a lovely domed nest of moss, and sprays of flowering grass. He did nearly all the building, but the hen used to sit in the nest a good deal. She laid two eggs, but never sat on them, and after allowing due time to elapse, I took away eggs and nest, and put the birds back in their smaller cage for the winter. This year I shall try them again in the summer.

I was much interested in Mr. Seth-Smith's account of his Rufous-tailed Grassfinches. My cock died in June, 1898, but my hen is still in beautiful plumage; in fact she almost resembles a young cock, and has much more red about her face than the hen in the coloured picture. Had she not proved her sex by laying eggs, one might have doubted it. I bought the pair three years ago, and they seem to be hardy birds.

I may mention that I was told I might keep a Crimson Finch hen with other birds, so I have an odd hen in my aviary cage, but she is inclined to be quarrelsome at times and bullies a pair of White-cheeked Grassfinches especially. However, I hope I shall not have to banish her, as she is a very pretty bird. My cock Crimson Finch is a picture of colour now.

I have a solitary specimen of *Lagonosticta rufopicta*: I believe Mr. Abrahams calls them Ruddy Fire Finches. It is a lovely little bird. I obtained a pair from Dresden last August, but the hen died.

C. HODGSON.

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THE SIBERIAN JAY.

*(Perisoreus infaustus).*

By E. G. B. MEADE-WALDO.

I do not recollect to have seen any account of this bird in confinement; nor to have ever seen one, with the exception of three that I have had, one of which is still in perfect health and condition in my aviary.

The Siberian Jay has a very wide range—from the North of Norway in the West, throughout Northern Russia to Kam-skatka in the East. It is a bird of the spruce-forest, and its sober colouring, of light and dark chestnut and ash colour, harmonizes wonderfully with the red bark of the spruce fir, and the various shades of grey of the lichens which festoon its branches, in the vast forests that form its home. It has but one near ally, the Canadian "Whiskey Jack," (a bird so often read of and so seldom seen) and it is almost, if not quite, as confiding in its wild state as the Canadian Jay is reported to be. It will not allow itself to be caught by the simple method of picking it up, or baiting the palm of one's hand and suddenly shutting it! But it will unconcernedly search the branches and bark of the trees for insects within a yard of you. In confinement it is not much tamer than in its wild state, but it will quickly come and feed from the hand.

However, I have never had any but wild-caught birds. My first specimen was procured in a curious manner. A friend was shooting elk in Norway, and, wishing for some Jays for skins, shot at this one, which, on receiving the shot, calmly "put its head under its wing," and went to sleep; a man climbed up and took it from its perch, and packed it up and put it away until next morning, when it was found to be alive and well. It was presented to me, and I had it for five years, when it died in a fit.

The Siberian Jay is not a bird suitable for a cage: it is an example of perpetual motion, flying up and down, climbing, hanging, searching everything for insects, examining its "hoards,"—for it hides everything it cannot eat, and always makes a reserve of some special dainty in the pouch under its tongue. It is very amusing to hold out a caterpillar or mealworm when it has its pouch full—it will make room by bringing up the pellet of food, balance it on a perch, come and take the mealworm and swallow it, and pouch the pellet again (*a*). It is omnivorous, but does not care for any farinaceous food if it can get anything else. It likes fruit, and is particularly fond of elderberries. Beetles are the most favourite of all food, and in Spring I feed mine largely on cockchaffers, which it prefers to anything.

The plumage is wonderfully dense and curiously hairy in texture, as would be expected from a bird which has to withstand the intense cold of North Siberian forests in Winter. It is extraordinary how these birds, the Pied Woodpeckers, and the Tits can support life during the long winter's night that lasts for weeks; for they do not migrate, and their food principally consists of eggs and pupæ of insects hidden in the bark of trees, as the whole country is ice-bound.

This Jay is a wonderful mimic, and its own voice is delightfully wild and musical; it has, however, a great variety of cries, some of which are perhaps rather the reverse. It is altogether a most charming and interesting bird, and a delightful pet to any one who does not demand something "gaudy."

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## NOTES ON VARIOUS SPECIES OF GREBES,

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE POWER OF  
WALKING AND DIGESTION POSSESSED BY THESE BIRDS.

By F. FINN, B.A., F.Z.S.,

*Deputy Superintendent of the Indian Museum.*

The remarkable birds forming the family *Podicipedidæ* of ornithologists have long possessed for me especial interest, and I venture herewith to record my observations on several of the species, which I have had the good fortune to study in captivity, and thus to observe under conditions which have, I hope, enabled me to set at rest some doubts concerning certain particulars in their economy.

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(*a*) A habit common to all this family.—E.G.B.M.-W.

I shall follow wherever possible the nomenclature and arrangement of Mr. H. E. Dresser, who, in his *Birds of Europe*, Vol. VIII., has given excellent figures and accounts of most of the species with which I shall here have occasion to deal.

I. *Podiceps cristatus*. THE GREAT CRESTED GREBE.

In January 1896 I procured from the Calcutta Bazaar a fine specimen of this species, which, however, had its legs broken or dislocated at the hock. In consequence of this, though the feet retained their normal position, it was quite helpless on land, and could only paddle very feebly in the water.

I nevertheless kept it for some days closely confined in a small cage, in the hope that the injured limbs might recover, but although the bird, after a day or two, fed well upon fish, and seemed strong and lively, its feet got no better; and when I ultimately turned it out on the Museum compound tank it soon disappeared, having probably drifted ashore and been stolen, or fallen a prey to some jackal.

When confined, though, as above noted, it took ordinary fish readily (I have seen it eat a dozen as long as large sprats and thicker, and then want more) it did not seem to like prawns, nor did it eat a small siluroid fish which I offered.

On two occasions I saw it deliberately eat one of its own feathers which came out while it was pluming itself, an operation in which, like Grebes generally, it was exceedingly assiduous.

It did not, however, reproduce either feathers or fish-bones in the form of "castings," as suspected by Yarrell (*British Birds*, Vol. IV., p. 121, Fourth Edition); I am certain of this, having had the bird under such close observation. I did, however, notice that its excrement was gritty, as if containing particles of comminuted bone; and I think that anyone who reads the evidence given on this point by Thompson in his "*Birds of Ireland*," Vol. III., pp. 173-189 (reference given by Yarrell *loc. cit.*) will agree with me that there is every reason to believe that this points to the conclusion that no castings *are* formed, and that feathers and bones are either actually digested or passed out in a comminuted condition.

This bird was of course in winter plumage, but kept its short ruff and ear-tufts expanded when in the cage. The bill was pink except the upper chap at the tip along the ridge and down to the nostrils where it was dark lead-colour. The iris was brilliant red.

Owing to the crippled condition of the bird I was unable to make any observations as to the power of walking in this

species ; but this deficiency I was able to supply when at home on leave in October, 1897, a young bird having been acquired by the London Zoological Gardens. This specimen, as my own had been, was very savage, drawing blood freely from my hands when I attempted to make it move. Although inclined merely to squat and shove itself along, it could and did walk ; but with reluctance, and for a short distance only, standing up on its toes and waddling along very clumsily. It frequently used its wings to aid it when running, these being full-grown ; though the head was still covered with variegated down, already indicating the form of the ornamental plumage on this part.

Some years ago, also in the London Zoological Gardens, I was able to observe the specimen of the large American Grebe, *Podiceps (Æchmophorus) major*, which the Society then possessed. This also seemed able to advance only a few steps at a time—waddling along a little way, and then flopping down on its breast—although it had been some time in the gardens, and was presumably in good health and not cramped or frightened ; the latter conditions obtaining to a certain extent in the case of the Great Crested Grebe above alluded to, for this was better on its legs the second time I saw it.

*Podiceps nigricollis.* THE EARED GREBE.

On February 11th, 1897, I got a male individual of this species from the Calcutta Bazaar, a sufficiently remarkable locality for it. This bird was weakly, and I found it dead on the third day after I obtained it, though it had fed freely on small prawns and fish. It was gentle and did not peck. Though I had it for at least one night in a cage, I found no “castings ;” yet, as in the case of the large species, I twice saw it eat one of its own feathers. It walked freely, several yards at a time, in an erect position, as stated by Dresser, who correctly figures it and other Grebes in this attitude. It had the bill lead-grey, dark on the ridge down to the nostrils, and whitish at the base and on the under surface of the mandible. The iris was reddish orange, with a yellowish-white inner ring, and the feet olive-lead, dark on the under surface of the toes and the outer side of the shank.

The specimen has been stuffed in the standing attitude for the Bird gallery in the Indian Museum.

*Podiceps fluviatilis.* THE EUROPEAN DABCHICK.

I once observed the gait of this bird on land, in the case of a specimen confined in the aviary in the Fish-House at the London Zoological Gardens. It walked on its toes in the



ordinary manner of birds, with an awkwardness which reminded me at the time of a diving duck, only in this case it was even more marked, as might be expected. I have often observed this species in a wild state, and have once seen it half run, half fly, over a narrow strip of grassy ground between two ponds; otherwise I never saw it ashore when wild. But to argue from this that it cannot walk would be like denying the cat the power of swimming because that beast is proverbially averse from water.

*Podiceps albipennis* (SHARPE). THE INDIAN DABCHICK.

I have had many examples of this species of various ages, and have consequently had ample opportunities of observing it. It frequently remains standing up for some time, and walks and runs about quite actively, and can even jump a little, helping itself frequently, when running, with its wings. Some specimens are less ready and able to walk than others, and more inclined to shove themselves along when squatting; but I attribute this to fatigue, or to flurry caused by fright. Any bird which is a clumsy walker normally will naturally blunder in its gait when hurried.

In the early part of December 1895, I got from the Bazaar a young specimen of this bird which I kept for some time in a cage, letting it out to swim and feed in any convenient receptacle for water, from an earthenware pot to a large masonry tank. It soon became remarkably tame, and before I had had it a week was inclined to follow me about, and seemed restless when confined and unable to get to me. I have let it out in my room and have had it come and squat down by my feet. In fact, when a photograph (*b*) was taken, I could not get the bird to stand still unless my hand was near. At the same time it exhibited much fear of natives, diving in fright when they approached, when it would let me lift it out of the water in my hand. In addition to intelligence, it showed much courage, on two occasions attacking a dog, and once a Scissor-billed Tern, which easily beat it off: the dog of course was not allowed the chance of retaliating. Its power of resisting injury was also remarkable; on three occasions (twice within a few minutes) it fell at least a yard on to a stone or concrete floor, and was not hurt, though it did not attempt to save itself with its wings.

The quills on these were not quite grown when I got it, and the head was likewise covered with variegated down.

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(*b*) This was not clear enough for reproduction,—most unfortunately, as it showed the bird in its normal standing position; *i.e.*, on its toes like an ordinary bird; though I have seen it also in the plantigrade posture.—F.F.

While I had it confined I never saw it bring up "castings," nor has this been the case with any of this species that I have kept; nor did I see any feathers swallowed by them, even in the case of a moulting bird.

I ultimately turned this bird out on the tank of the Museum compound, where, after remaining tame for a day or two, it speedily became wild. It was inclined to associate with a Coot, which did not appear to be anxious for its society; but towards the ducks I from time to time put on it exhibited what looked very much like animosity, attacking them at first most vigorously. I fancy, however, that this was merely juvenile mischief, for it became more peaceable as it grew older.

When I placed the Great Crested Grebe above alluded to on one occasion on the tank, its small relative hastily approached, and diving below, could be easily seen through the clear water to come and peck the large bird's toe, afterwards rising to the surface out of reach.

It hunted insects and crustaceans when at large, as well as fish, and appreciated a varied diet of these when in captivity. It often came out on to a piece of brickwork, especially at first, to plume itself, and I have even seen it resting there.

I never saw this or any other specimen use its wings when diving; when performing this action it used both feet together, while in swimming it moved by alternate strokes.

This bird had lost nearly all its quills towards the end of January 1896, though they had only recently been fully developed. By this time also the head appeared to be feathered. On the 2nd February the quills were nearly grown again, as I find from my notes then taken.

In the following month (March) I procured an adult, and turned this also out on the tank, and the two soon became friendly. I observed before turning out the new bird that, although hungry and searching for food with its head under (a common action) in the water in which I placed it, it nevertheless refused to eat a sharp-toothed Goby; it took, however, a spider and some mole-crickets. At the end of March I noticed that this specimen also had moulted all its quills, so that this must be the usual mode of moulting in this species of Grebe at all events (*c*).

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(c) I have observed a similar complete moult of the quills in the Common Coot (*Fulica atra*) the Waterhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) and in a species of *Porphyrio*. In the case of the Coot the observation has been previously made by St. John (Natural History and Sport in Morayshire), but I noticed it independently on the tank here. The Moorhen I noticed in St. James' Park in 1897, and the *Porphyrio* in the Calcutta Zoological Gardens.—F.F.

Soon after this I went to the Andamans, and on my return could not distinguish with certainty my old pet from the new Dabchick. I did see, indeed, one of them make a Whistling Teal fly out of the water; and if this were the young bird at its accustomed mischief, it had by this time advanced nearly into full breeding plumage, which was not the case with the other bird; but this is, I should think, unlikely.

After this one of these Dabchicks disappeared. I often saw one fly short distances in the evening, and noticed that it alighted "anyhow," letting the feet trail behind all the time, and not putting them out in front like a duck or gull.

One of the birds, I think the same, remained on the tank for at least a year after this, but ultimately disappeared. As before indicated, I have had other specimens, and noted in these also the power of walking denied to the Grebes by some observers. On two occasions I experimented with some in order to find out if they could rise off the ground and get on the wing. The results of the experiments have left me somewhat in doubt on this point. In the first case a bird let loose on a lawn was able to raise itself a foot or so from the ground, and I note that it "could evidently have flown off in good form." This was early in 1897, and later in the same year I repeated the experiment with another bird, which could hardly clear the ground, but it was, I think, in a weak state, for it could not walk far at a time, and when turned out on the tank came out of the water, a thing I have seldom seen a healthy Dabchick do. In fact, I believe these birds sleep in the water, judging from what I have seen.

The iris in this species is brownish yellow, but I noticed that in my young bird it was hazel at first, and in a still younger one, (downy all over, and with no feathers on the wings) it was brown.

The beak is buff, black along the ridge, and green at angle of mouth.

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## BICHENO'S OR DOUBLE-BANDED FINCHES.

By the Rev. C. D. FARRAR.

As no article has yet appeared on these lovely little birds, I have put together some notes on this rare species.

Bichenos are among the tiniest of the little finches that come from Australia. I know of nothing so tiny as their little legs and feet: they are more like little threads than legs.

The importation of Bichenos is very rare—only about

one a year, sometimes not even that; and consequently they command high prices, and when their great delicacy on landing is taken into account, they are literally, when acclimatised, worth their weight in gold.

I should say that of the few pairs that come over nearly all die within a few days of reaching their new homes, unless their new owners are more than usually skilful in the difficult art of hardening off. A friend of mine this spring bought two pairs, and they were all dead but one within forty-eight hours. I cannot, therefore, recommend Bichenos to everyone; but if a man really loves his birds and understands them, I would say, try Bichenos. The nuisance is that Bichenos always come over at the very coldest season of the year, usually about January; so this adds to the risks, as a cold journey will finish off these tender little things.

Bichenos are marvellously active and pop about like little mice, and it is no easy matter to catch an escaped one. I have at the present moment quite a little flock of them, and they are certainly great favourites of mine. They are very tame and friendly (at least mine are), and will let me go quite close to them in their big aviary without showing the least fear, and they will feed all round my feet.

They are gregarious and keep together all day; frequently uttering their call-note to keep their mates apprised of their positions. In an aviary they always sleep in a box warmly lined with hay, and, when hardened, do not mind the cold a bit. My oldest pair have been in a cold aviary all the year round, and are always the first to take a cold bath, winter or summer.

The cock bird has a pretty little song—*diddy dee, diddy dee, diddy*—repeated at intervals.

Their favourite food I find to be Indian millet, and sometimes they will take a little canary.

Bichenos are beautifully marked, especially on the wings, where the black and white pencilling is exquisite. The front of the head is black in the cock, and brownish rusty in the hen; the back snuff-brown; the tail black; the breast of the cock and the cheeks dazzling snow-white, but the belly and underparts of the hen are buffy-white.

I can pick out the sexes with tolerable certainty, but I doubt if a beginner could. The surest test is the song, but then I doubt if a cock newly come over would sing. I do not think that the double band on the chest is any mark of sex. The beak is bluish, and the legs and feet slate colour.



So far, I have not bred any ; but if we are to believe the ease and readiness with which they are said to go to nest, I ought to have done so long ago ; but then, we do not believe all that the guides tell us. My own impression is that few are lucky enough to keep Bichenos alive, let alone breed them. As I have a small flock, I may be among the lucky few this year and breed some ; I hope I shall. I fancy that, like so many Australian finches, nearly all the Bichenos that are imported are young birds in their nest feathers ; as I notice mine change wonderfully in the colour of their white parts.

Bichenos are very apt to "go light" when they first come over ; so that it is well in buying them to feel the breast bone, as if it is at all *sharp*, they are "going home shortly." They require to be very gradually hardened off, or you will infallibly lose them.

For those who, like myself, admire something that is wonderfully beautiful, rare, and difficult to keep, I say, try Bichenos. To the ordinary amateur, I would say, let Bichenos severely alone at any price.

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

### THE LICENSING OF BIRD-CATCHERS.

Mr. Seth-Smith is, possibly, not aware that the Secretary of State has power, upon the application of the County Council, to make an order for the protection of any species beyond the statutory close time, in the whole or any part of the County. I believe I am correct in saying that under orders already in force the Goldfinch is protected until the 31st of August in London, Middlesex, Devon, Isle of Wight, Anglesea, Carwarvon, East Suffolk, Durham, North Riding of Yorks., Huntingdon, Isle of Ely, Liberty of Peterborough, all three divisions of Lincolnshire, and East Sussex. This list is not exhaustive, for I think some recent orders are not included.

To turn to the subject indicated by the heading, I should be glad to receive suggestions as to the practical form which the scheme should assume. In particular, I should like to elicit the opinion of members upon the following points :—(1) What shall be the cost of the annual license ? (2) Should dealers in *foreign* birds be licensed as well as dealers in British birds ? (3) How should a dealer be defined, and what provisions would be required to prevent any interference with the sale of birds by unlicensed amateurs ?

Would it not be possible to prohibit the sale of cages under a certain size, and make the use of such cages illegal after (say) three years from the passing of the act ? And could not every licensed bird-dealer be compelled to allow so many cubic inches of cage-space to each bird ?

I have been appointed Local Hon. Secretary for Brighton, by the Society for the Protection of Birds, and I shall be very pleased to enrol any

who would like to become members. Membership involves the payment of the ruinous sum of two-pence, as a registration fee, but no subscription whatever.

HORATIO R. FILLMER.

SIR,—With respect to your letter in the February Magazine, with reference to registering bird-catchers, I am quite at one with you. When one dealer receives 130 dozen birds of various kinds per week, as was stated in the *Daily Telegraph* a few weeks ago, I think it is quite time something was done to prevent this wholesale catching, or shall I say slaughter: as I am sure not one quarter of them can live in the small filthy cages they are crowded into. I think each catcher should be registered and have a certain district, and the number of birds he is allowed to capture should be limited; and the dealer also should not be permitted to have more than one bird to a cubic foot of space. This matter could be seen into by the Vestry Sanitary Inspectors of the various Parishes, as well as the sanitation of the shops. I have been patiently waiting for a long time to see something done to stop the cruelty to our feathered friends; now I feel sure my expectations will be fully realised. I wish you would grapple with cayenne feeding, and tailing and flighting (*d*).

ARTHUR JONES.

#### PHOTOGRAPHING BIRDS.

SIR,—The letter upon this subject, by Mr. Hett, which appeared in the March number of this Magazine, touches upon a subject so interesting to aviculturists that I think it should not pass without comment. The formation of a Photographic Club among our members would be a capital idea providing that a sufficient number would join, but I fear there are but few who combine the two delightful hobbies of aviculture and photography.

I cannot believe that a photograph would be more appreciated by our members than a coloured plate, especially when that coloured plate is from a drawing by an artist who is noted for his careful and accurate delineation of living birds. Neither do I believe that a photograph, however well taken, is necessarily more accurate than a chromo print.

The great drawback to photographs of birds is that, however truthfully the form and attitude of the subject may be portrayed, the colours are not reproduced; and, moreover, photographs of any coloured objects generally give one an absolutely *false* idea of the colours. For instance, had a photograph of the Rufous-tailed Finches appeared in the Magazine instead of a coloured illustration, many who do not actually know the bird would be led to suppose that the male possessed a black or very dark mask instead of the beautiful red face so accurately portrayed by the artist.

Take, for another example, the Gouldian Finch (*P. mirabilis*); we all know that his head is bright red, his tail-coverts sky blue, his chest blue or purple and his abdomen yellow. In a photograph he would be represented with a black head, pure white tail-coverts, his chest nearly white, and his

(*d*) Mr. Jones' proposition about a cubic foot to each bird, if enforced, would put a stop at once to the importation and sale of all small foreign birds in this country. It is a good general rule for the aviculturist, but utterly and hopelessly impracticable for the dealer.—A.G.B.

abdomen almost black, thus giving an absolutely false idea of the true markings. Again, the Parrot Finch would appear to be entirely black.

I fear Mr. Hett will be disappointed when he first opens his printing-frame to see his photo. of a Kiugfisher; being a good "sitter" it may be possible to use "colour sensitive" plates (which require a longer exposure than ordinary plates) but if not, I fear the brilliant blue of the bird's back will appear vivid white in the print, and his reddish-brown breast will be nearly black. However, British birds, as a rule, are not bad subjects for photography so far as colour is concerned, but unfortunately they do not much care about being "taken" and are not always good "sitters" (e).

I have not tried to photograph a bird in a cage (I don't like cages), but in an outdoor aviary I have had fair success with such birds as White-throated Finches, Jungle Bush Quails, foreign Doves and other soberly-coloured species.

If such a Club were started as Mr. Hett suggests, I would propose that it should embrace the photographing of birds and their nests and eggs in a wild state as well as in captivity: it would never do to confine it to caged birds.

D. SETH-SMITH.

#### AGES ATTAINED BY BIRDS IN CAPTIVITY.

Mr. Meade-Waldo's interesting article in last month's *Avicultural Magazine* has led me to search my memory for cases of unusually old cage-birds. The following are the only ones worth mentioning which I can call to mind, and scarcely any of them are very remarkable—they are, indeed, chiefly noteworthy as negative evidence, and the fact that the cases of advanced age within my personal experience are so few and inconspicuous tends to show that the average life is very short.

In the *Avicultural Magazine* for November, 1897, a common Barbary Dove 23 years of age is mentioned. This Dove is still living in the possession of Colonel Cuthbert Barlow, of Brighton, and is now about 25 years old.

The oldest small passerine bird which I ever saw was a Canary belonging to my grandfather. This bird was about 16 years old at the time of its death. It was very tame, and would never settle down for the night until it had given its master's finger a friendly peck. If this ceremony were omitted the bird would fidget about for a long time after dark.

I kept a good many Canaries at one time, but I do not recollect that any of them lived to attain 12 years. In 1891 I bred from a yellow cock which I had myself bred in 1882—there were two young ones which left the nest, but they were very feeble and both died in their nest feathers. The father had never bred before.

I had an Avadavat for seven years—this bird became partly white in plumage.

I have a cock Parson Finch which was exhibited at the Crystal Palace Show in February, 1893, and which must therefore be upwards of six years old. The beak is overgrown, the plumage very loose, and the whole appearance of the bird indicative of advanced age.

(e) I do not mean in the breeding-season.—D.S.-S.

I have also a pair of Golden-breasted Waxbills which were purchased in the summer of 1892, and which must therefore be about seven years old.

HORATIO R. FILLMER.

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### CRIMSON FINCHES.

SIR,—In self-defence I send the following little facts. You will remember that Mr. Osbaldeston wrote that he had a cock Crimson Finch that would “clear the deck” of any bird of his own fighting weight. Unfortunately, just after writing my notes on Crimson Finches, I put a pair of Blue Bonnets into their aviary—rather anxiously, I confess, for fear lest the Blue Bonnets should be killed by the Crimson Finches! Unfortunately, things went the other way, as the cock Blue Bonnet bit the wing of the cock Crimson Finch and he died.

I at once wrote to Mr. Osbaldeston for his cock just in the hope of proving my case. I thought if this little savage behaves, surely the Council will believe me this time. He came late at night and I put him with my hen. I expected next morning to find the lady dead and in pieces (*vide* members’ statements). On the contrary, Othello was all right and so was poor Desdemona, and they have continued the very best of friends ever since; and if the story ends as it should—happily, they intend to rear a nest of little termagants for the edification of the Society this summer.

C. D. FARRAR.

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### RESIGNATION OF THE SECRETARY.

In consequence of matters connected with the Society into which it is unnecessary and undesirable here to enter, I have resigned the Secretaryship.

It is painful to me to sever my official connection with the Society, of which I am proud to have been one of the founders—but I believe that the step which I have taken is the right one, both for me and for the Society.

I have now much less spare time than I had when I became Secretary, and, on the other hand, the work of the Society has increased. I doubt therefore whether I could, under any circumstances, have continued to hold the post very much longer.

I wish to express my grateful appreciation of the kindness and courtesy which I have received from the members during my tenure of office, and I hope and believe that the change of *personnel* may be of benefit to the Society, and that it will grow and prosper even more in the future than it has done in the past.

HORATIO R. FILLMER.







BLUE SUGAR-BIRD  
(*Dacnis cayana*).

From Living Specimen in the possession of Mr. H. J. Fulljames.

Mintern Bros. Chrome.

THE  
**Avicultural Magazine,**

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THE BLUE SUGAR-BIRD.

(*Dacnis cayana*).

By A. G. BUTLER, Ph.D.

Our Secretary has asked me to write a short article upon this beautiful little species ; not because I have ever kept the bird, but because those who have made the attempt have been so far unfortunate that they do not feel sufficient confidence in their treatment to recommend it to others ; whilst, at the same time, they are too busy to bring together what facts are already known respecting the species.

The Blue Sugar-bird has a wide range, extending from Central America in the north, southwards to Bolivia in the west, and Southern Brazil in the east.

The plate, although a little greener than the bird usually appears, will give a good idea of the male ; the female differs in its bright green colouring, the head being blue and the throat ashy ; the abdomen is of a yellower green than the upper parts.

Of the wild life of this species very little seems to be recorded. It is met with in small companies in the open borders of the forest region and in meadowland studded with scrub. Judging from its affinities, the nest should be open and cup-shaped and the eggs spotted.

It is known that *Dacnis cayana* in its wild state feeds upon insects and fruit ; therefore, in captivity it ought surely to be treated precisely in the same way as a Tanager. Mr. Fulljames, who has had two examples, and who (I believe) was the first to exhibit the species in this country, fed his specimens upon banana, sponge-cake, and yolk of egg. Mr. Fillmer, who succeeded in keeping an example for nine months, fed it upon banana, milk-sop, and a mixture of dried yolk of egg, sponge-cake, and ants' eggs.

Dr. Russ speaks of the Blue Sugar-bird as less delicate than the Yellow-winged Sugar-bird ; he does not say what he fed it on ; but, for *Cereba*, he recommends a mixture of grated skinned sweet almonds, mixed with crushed biscuits and white sugar.

It appears to me that there is no possible reason why the same food which keeps one fruit- and insect-eater in perfect health should not be used with equal success in the case of all (a).

For four years I kept a *Zosterops* in perfect health and condition on a mixture of bread-crumbs, potato, yolk of egg, Abrahams' food and ants' cocoons, with orange, sweet-water grapes split open, over-ripe pear, or sweet apple. On the same mixture I kept a Superb Tanager in absolutely faultless plumage and vigorous health, for nineteen months ; and only lost it in consequence of an epidemic of influenza, which greatly reduced my collection during the two months in which it raged. I have already kept two male Scarlet Tanagers for nineteen or twenty months in perfect health and condition on the same food.

These facts would be sufficient for me ; but, at the same time, as the *Cerebidæ* are somewhat more insectivorous than Tanagers, I should certainly offer them mealworms ; and, if they took kindly to this form of insect-food, I should not stint it.

I am well aware that some of our members think me wholly in the wrong in always recommending the same food for insectivorous birds, yet it would surely be a greater error to omit to recommend that which I have found most satisfactory. For ten years I have fed an American Blue-bird upon it, and he is still full of vigour ; for ten years a *Liothrix* had nothing else (excepting seed, of which he swallowed his full share) ; for over five years I have kept a Blackbird in perfect health upon this mixture, and he is as full of song as ever. It may not suit a Nightingale ; yet I have kept that bird twice as long upon it as upon the yolk-of-egg + ants' cocoons + mealworm diet, and at about a tenth the cost. In my opinion, therefore, this food deserves a fair and impartial trial in the case of Sugar-birds.

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(a) Sugar-birds of two species lived for years and years in the Parrot house in the Zoological Gardens—on the usual mixture provided there for Tanagers, one example of which (the Blue-headed Tanager) has been in the Parrot house since 1884.—E. G. B. M.-W.



## EIDER DUCKS IN CAPTIVITY.

By W. H. ST. QUINTIN.

I do not know if there is at the present time anybody beside myself in this country who has tame Eiders. If so, I am unaware of the fact, though I have often made enquiries of persons who might be likely to know if this were the case. They have not, I think, been kept at the Zoological Gardens of late years ; though at one time, I believe about fifty years ago, they were bred there.

My first pair of Eiders were sent to me by an Orkney fisherman, who managed to rear a duck and a drake with considerable trouble—the young birds not taking any food that was offered to them except earthworms.

I found great difficulty at first in arriving at the best diet suited to these birds in captivity ; but after many trials came to the conclusion that barley meal, mixed with Spratt's poultry meal, moistened so as to form large pellets, or balls, with a small quantity of fresh Ox- or Rabbit-liver daily, was sufficient to keep the birds in the best of health, when once they were accustomed to it.

For the first few weeks the young should have earthworms ; indeed they will look at nothing else, but by degrees they can be trained to the same diet that answers for the adults. I should add that the old birds will eat bread freely and, when very hungry, grain as well.

A fox killed my old drake after I had kept him nine years ; and his mate died, apparently of old age, two years later.

At present I have two fine drakes—one a descendant of the original pair—the other drake and three ducks having been hatched from eggs sent to me from Northumberland. There is also a young duck, the survivor of three ducklings hatched last year.

The young are by no means easily reared. Besides rats, the greatest enemies to young ducklings that I know of, exposure to hot sun will often bring on attacks of heat-apoplexy. I lost two fine young birds last summer from this cause, when they were of the size of a Teal. The young birds moreover often go off in a sort of decline after getting fully feathered ; and in short they are not easy subjects to manage. But still to my mind they are worth a good deal of trouble. Their extreme tameness, the wild "cooing" of the drakes in the spring, and

their quaint ways in the courting season, make them very interesting pets. The drakes go into a very complete eclipse as soon as the ducks begin to sit. The pistachio green patch on the nape, the cream white breast, and the snowy neck and scapulars all being exchanged for a suit of sables. But almost as soon as the summer plumage is completed the change begins again, and white feathers begin to show here and there, and the complete black dress is worn for a very short period. Of course the above moults only affect the body feathers ; the flights and tail being shed in the autumn only. It is wonderful how rapidly these feathers are thrown. If the birds are in good condition, they will cast all their flights in twenty-four hours, and they are very quickly regained.

Unlike the other Diving Ducks, Eiders use their wings vigorously when diving, to force themselves under, and to guide themselves when beneath the surface.

All my Eider Ducks, while incubating, have sat steadily through the whole twenty-eight days without coming off. I used to be much concerned about my first old duck, when she remained on her nest so long ; and I used to provide her with food and water within her reach, until I was satisfied that she never touched them. She became quite grown over by a mass of chickweed in the bed of pampas grass in which she annually made her nest.

I do not know if in the wild state Eiders are an exception to the rule prevailing amongst other incubating ducks, of coming off once in the twenty-four hours to wash and feed. It might easily be ascertained at the Farne Islands for instance. If it is so, it seems hard to account for the habit.

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## MIMICRY BY BIRDS IN A WILD STATE.

By O. E. CRESSWELL.

It has often seemed to me an interesting question how far birds, which in captivity become imitative, are so in a wild state. Probably some members of the Society have sojourned in the lands of Parrots and Parrakeets, and might give us instances of their exercising their powers of mimicry without being induced to do so by the associations of captivity. There are, however, enough potential mimics among our own birds for it to be worth while noting instances, and I fancy that far more species of British birds have these imitative powers than are generally credited with them. Two undoubted instances are within my

personal knowledge of late years, which may be worth recording, the first of a Starling, the second of a Blackbird.

1. I have in my grounds a large and very fine Scotch fir, almost entirely covered with dense masses of ivy ; Mr. Ruskin once wrote that a Scotch fir so clad is one of the most beautiful objects in Nature. Certainly this tree was, at the time of which I write, most beautiful, with immense tapering racemes of ivy drooping down towards a pool. It is less so now, for though the ivy near the stem seems ever to thicken, the lower drooping boughs have died.

It is the home of innumerable birds, chiefly Starlings. Now-a-days my Bankiva Jungle hens insist upon making their nests in the abysses of the ivy, sometimes at the very top, which must be quite a hundred feet high. Javanese Peafowls, too, often roost on the boughs, but do not seem at all to overawe the smaller fry. One evening, above the hubbub of probably hundreds of voices at roosting-time, I heard the distinct " come bôck " of a hen Guinea-fowl. I then possessed no Guinea-fowl, but suspected that some might have been surreptitiously introduced at a cottage near, where I did not allow Poultry to be kept. Another evening, one of my men distinctly heard the supposed Guinea-fowl. It turned out to be a Starling, which for some months frequented the tree, and treated us to music which doubtless it had picked up at a farm where Guinea-fowl were kept.

2. The second instance is a much more striking one—that of a wild Blackbird which imitates a postman's whistle. In the countrified region where I live, post offices are far apart ; and so the postman blows a whistle as he drives along the road, and letters are taken at or brought out from many cottage-gates. His whistle is very prolonged and very shrill. Early last year (I think in February) the well-known whistle was heard, once or twice, hours before the proper time. Everyone was puzzled ; then it was traced to a hamlet about a quarter of a mile from my gate. I heard it several times myself, and thought it the work of a mischievous boy who ought to be suppressed. It became more frequent, and after some days one of my servants assured me that the whistler was a bird. This I really did not at first believe, but was soon convinced. The whistler was, and I am glad to say is, a singularly beautiful Blackbird, who day by day whistled more strongly, generally from an apple tree in my grounds. His voice, nearly always heard from above (for he haunts a valley) sounds much farther off than it is ; as the season advanced, he continually began his long whistle and then

broke off into his natural song. Then, when the season of song passed, he was silent and it was feared that he had come to grief. However, he is again in his old haunts and again whistles daily, but hardly with the force of last year. He has only begun in April, instead of much earlier, and so possibly his voice may gain strength. I should be interested to know if any of our members are acquainted with similar instances. I may say that the postman comes from six or seven miles distance, and passes rapidly: which makes it more remarkable that the bird should have acquired such perfect imitation of his whistle (*b*).

3. I cannot help alluding here to the curious similarity between the notes of the Cuckoo and of an Australian Dove (*Geopelia humeralis*). I do not do so as the least *à propos* of these instances of imitation; of course there is no mimicry whatever here, simply a curious similarity, of which evidently the birds of two very dissimilar races are conscious. I had for seven years a peculiarly tame cock of this species of Dove, variously called "Bronze-necked" and "Barred-shouldered." He would latterly, almost to order, cuckoo for my headman, and generally for me. The Cuckoos were evidently taken in, and used to fly close to his aviary. One spring, the usual accounts of a wonderfully early Cuckoo being heard, this time in Herefordshire, appeared in some of the London papers; they were quotations from a Herefordshire newspaper. I enquired the authority, and was informed that some masons, restoring a church, had frequently and distinctly heard the Cuckoo on a hill in my grounds. It was, of course, the Dove, whose voice from his aviary on high ground was heard more than half a mile away as the crow flies, across the Wye. Since the demise of this favourite last autumn, his widow has begun to cuckoo, which she rarely, if ever, did before. Yesterday (April 16th) I happened to be close to her aviary, when, far below in the valley, I heard, for the first time this year, the notes of the veritable Cuckoo—she immediately answered, crying "cuckoo" twice. There is, I believe, an old superstition that the chief occupation of the year is to be that which is the occupation when one hears the Cuckoo for the first time. I hope aviculturists will not deem the prospect of my year to be very unprofitable when I say that I was making a Sabbatical tour round many aviaries!

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(*b*) I have not the least doubt that this whistle was learnt by a young bird when learning its parent's song, of which the nestling considered it a part. In like manner there is a Blackbird here, born in my front garden about two years ago, which picked up, as part of its performance, the first stanza of a well-known air (probably Irish) which a Parrot next door constantly repeated.—A. G. B.



## CORRESPONDENCE.

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### THE WAXWING AND THE PERSIAN BULBUL.

SIR,—May I ask what is the correct food for, and treatment of, the Bohemian Waxwing in confinement, and if it is not a very hardy bird, more suited to outdoor than indoor life?

Also food and treatment of the Persian Bulbul, and what are the distinguishing features by which the real singing one may be identified? I think I remember reading somewhere an article by Dr. Butler, in which he stated either that the Persian variety was the only one possessing a sweet song, or that there were two varieties of Persian, one much superior to the other.

A. A. PEARSON.

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*The following answer has been sent to Mr. Pearson :*

The Waxwing should be fed upon hips and haws, all kinds of small fruits; soft food, consisting of breadcrumbs two parts, potato boiled at least one day previously one part, ants' cocoons and yolk of egg, of each one part; also hemp-seed and mealworms or other insects.

Waxwings are very thirsty and therefore dirty birds; they seldom or never wash, and require a large cage and much attention to keep them clean and in health.

The Persian Bulbul is the most musical and charming of all birds of the genus *Pycnonotus*; but its Western Indian race is very inferior, is smaller and sings rather poorly.

The true Persian bird is of about the same size as the Red-vented Bulbul. The staple food should consist of breadcrumbs, ants' cocoons and yolk of egg moistened either with potato or grated carrot; but fruit should be given daily and young lettuce chopped up, when obtainable; also mealworms and other grubs, or spiders.

A. G. BUTLER.

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### BLOSSOM-HEADED PARRAKEETS.

SIR.—I should be glad if you could furnish me with a few hints as to the management of Blossom-headed Parrakeets. The birds I have are, apparently, a couple of young ones with lavender-coloured heads, and minus tails.

The food I am giving is canary and hempseed, but as I have already lost one young bird (possibly from the effects of the voyage) I am anxious to treat the others correctly.

I suppose one has to wait a good while before the full adult plumage is donned.

I have them in rather small cages at present, but intend turning

them into the garden aviary next month. Are they hardy enough birds for out of doors? Any information on the subject will oblige.

H. E. GODDARD.

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*The following reply was sent to Mr. Goddard.*

I should advise your adding bread, soaked in warm water, to the canary and hempseed you are giving your Parrakeets (of course, in a separate tin). Add millet, if you like, and some pea-nuts.

I would not put them out until the end of May, at the earliest; and, for this year, I would take them in again towards the end of August. Next year you might put them out rather earlier, and leave them out altogether.

They will not, probably, be in full colour until after their moult in 1900.

F. G. DUTTON.

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#### AN INVITATION.

SIR,—I think it would be rather nice if members, who do not object to do so, would signify their willingness, in these columns, to show their aviaries to other members whenever they might happen to be in their neighbourhood. For myself, I should always be glad to exhibit my small collection to any *member* visitor to Hastings or St. Leonard's, who might be taking a drive in the vicinity of St. Helen's Lodge (c).

E. A. H. HARTLEY.

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#### AGES ATTAINED BY BIRDS IN CAPTIVITY.

SIR,—There was so little response to Mr. Meade-Waldo's suggestion to communicate cases of longevity of birds in confinement, that I venture to send some of mine, though I did not deem them of sufficient interest until I found there was only one other communication, and that your own.

Last month there died, in my aviary, a little cock Cockatiel, which I bred in my aviary nineteen years ago next month (May). Until last year he always went by the name of "young Joey," in order to distinguish him from his father, who was then killed, I regret to say, by another Parrakeet. In January, 1880, I bought him from a lady who wrote that she "was pleased her *old* Joey was going to a good home." So if he were "old" then there is no saying how old he was when he died.

I have at present in the aviary a common Red-billed Weaver, which I brought with me from my old home in Lincolnshire, eleven years ago this month; I do not know how long I had had him then, but not more than a year or two.

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(c) I do not think any aviculturist is likely to object to this. I am always glad to let anyone who is interested in birds see my aviaries, provided I am there to receive them: naturally it is not desirable that strangers should walk in on a tour of inspection in the absence of the owner.—A. G. B.

I had a pair of Blue Robins eight years, when the hen died; she looked very old when she was sent to me, but she nested freely for some years. The cock I then considerably gave to a friend: he was such a murderer! And in the third year after that, he succumbed himself to the fate he had visited on so many.

I have lately lost a Red Rosella, which had lived four-and-a-half years in the aviary *without his upper mandible*. This, I think, is an interesting record. Five years ago this spring, he had the upper mandible torn out in a fight with a Bulla Bulla. How he contrived to live I never knew, as he was not fed by a mate or any other bird; but I think bread-and-milk sop—a saucerful of which is daily supplied to the aviary—formed his chief diet. He used also to spend a lot of time “nuzzling” about in the hempseed, and I believe he was picking up chipped seed which other birds had cracked and wasted. He seemed quite happy, and the only difficulty he appeared to labour under was his inability to free his new feathers from their sheath in moulting-time, which gave him a very peculiar appearance, and must have been very uncomfortable. I had had him about ten years when he died.

I have only kept the larger Parrots for eleven years, so have no instances of longevity to record among them, at present.

E. A. H. HARTLEY.

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SIR.—I do not know if the longevity of my birds is anything remarkable. I have had a Virginian Cardinal since December, 1885, and he is still in very good plumage, though his singing powers have lessened, and his feet show signs of old age in loss of claws. He is one of the tamest birds I have ever had, and will sing to me or any of his two or three special friends “by desire,” like a Piping Bullfinch. He puts up his crest and flutters his wings directly I begin to talk to him, and then starts whistling in a soft subdued key, quite different from his independent song. He is rewarded with a few hempseeds. Often he calls me to him if I have been absent for a short time, and will continue to sing as long as I talk to him and praise him. He was very wild when I first had him, but soon became tame.

I have also had an Orange Bishop for ten years, and a Pileated Finch for seven years. This bird has such an antipathy to Aurora Finches that I have had to give up keeping them. I hoped, after the lapse of a year, that the Pileated Finch would have forgotten his animosity; but directly I put a new pair of Auroras into my aviary-cage he flew at them most viciously. He never molests any other birds. When angry, he erects his beautiful crimson crest and attempts to “sing” after his own fashion—for it cannot be called a song, the notes are harsh and shrill.

I omitted to say that my Cardinal used frequently to sing during the night in his younger days.

C. A. HODGSON.

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#### THE BLUE SUGAR BIRD.

SIR,—I have a *Dacnis cayana* whose sex I should like to discover. I bought it last January, out of colour and in rough plumage. It was then a dull green, but now the green has become much more brilliant, and the

forehead and shoulder-tips are a fairly bright blue. It is in perfect feather, and very lively. It thrives on the same food as my Superb and Violet Tanagers and my Zosterops—Mr. Abraham's Insectivorous Food, preserved egg and potato, and a constant supply of fruit. It will take mealworms from my hand, but soon drops them.

C. A. HODGSON.

*The following reply was sent to Miss Hodgson :*

Your specimen of *Dacnis cayana* is a cock, and will no doubt become still bluer and brighter. The cocks seem usually out of colour when imported. It may be that they are young birds, but I think that it is equally probable that the species goes through a seasonal change of plumage, which is certainly the case with *Cæreba cyanea*. My bird would not touch mealworms, nor any insects which I offered it, and I doubt whether it ate the ants' eggs in its food. It is unwise to deduce too much from the behaviour of a single specimen, but my experience of this bird has led me to have grave doubts as to whether the species is in any proper sense insectivorous, though it may eat insects occasionally (as even Waxbills will). (d) From its great liking for honey, I should infer that it feeds largely on the nectar of flowers.

HORATIO R. FILLMER.

### THE BLUE-BEARDED JAY.

SIR,—I should be glad if you would be good enough to give me a little information about a bird I have. The dealer called it an Australian Blue-eared Jay. It is rather larger than a Blackbird. The top of its head is black, with a black crest, a black bib-like patch over the chest, white breast and abdomen, black wings and tail, end of tail-feathers white; small bright blue patch over the eyes, and larger one underneath; just behind the crest and between the shoulders is a pale blue-grey patch, rest of back black; beak black, long and rather pointed; legs and feet blackish, nail of hinder toe long and curved. Eyes in front of its head, bright and piercing, pupils black, iris yellow.

I am feeding him with "softbilo" and mealworms. He seems likely to be easily tamed, as I have only had him two days and he will take mealworms from my fingers already.

R. M. BARBER.

*The following reply was sent to Mrs. Barber :*

Your bird is undoubtedly the Blue-bearded Jay (a South American species). I have had an example for more than four years: it is always in perfect health, and, excepting when moulting, in perfect plumage. It is very fond of having its head scratched and its sides tickled. I believe that all the American Jays are very tame and confiding birds.

(d) It would be interesting to hear the experience of others who have kept the species.—ED.



You should let him have any mice you can catch, and Sparrows' eggs when you can get them; also raw meat twice a week.

A. G. BUTLER.

## THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS.

A Bill has been introduced into Parliament "to Consolidate and amend the Law relating to the Protection of Wild Birds."

The chief alteration in the law which would be effected by this bill is that in future *all* wild birds over the whole country would be protected from the 1st of February till the end of August, with the exception of species exempted from protection by order of the Secretary of State made on the application of a County Council. In other words, at present all birds with certain exceptions may be killed, after the passing of this bill all birds with certain exceptions would be protected.

I shall be pleased to send a print of the bill, on loan, to any member interested in the subject.

HORATIO R. FILLMER.

## THE LICENSING OF BIRD-CATCHERS.

SIR,—With regard to the questions you ask in reference to the above subject, I think the cost of the annual license should not be less than 21/- for catchers and dealers, and that the foreign bird agents should be licensed as well as the dealers.

A dealer should be defined thus, I think: Anyone who buys birds wholesale to sell in a shop, also anyone who hawks birds round from door to door to sell again, and any amateur who catches birds to sell again should pay catcher's license and dealer's license.

With reference to giving reasonable space for birds, I think catchers and dealers should be compelled to give space according to the size of the bird. For instance: birds 6 inches and under, from tip of beak to end of tail, should be given by the catcher and dealer 6 cubic inches of space each when crowded together, and 12 cubic inches when in the hands of customers; and birds between 6 and 9 inches long, 9 cubic inches of space when caged together by catcher and dealer, or 18 cubic inches when in the hands of a customer. If this were done, cage-makers would be compelled to make their cages the right dimensions, otherwise they would be unsaleable.

ARTHUR JONES.

SIR,—If the bird-protection leagues believe that any good is being done by all the restrictions that they are putting upon the liberty of Englishmen, let them at least not over-reach themselves by ludicrous severity. Let a license be imposed upon professional catchers if they like, and, while they are about it, let it be £50 a year: it will be no more prohibitive than a guinea. As to imposing a license upon private persons, that is all nonsense: who can decide whether the owner intends to keep his

bird, give it away, or sell it? Would any man be foolish enough to run the risk of a guinea fine by owning his intention to sell a shilling bird? To interfere with dealers is to put a stop to aviculture: that is my view of the case.

A. G. BUTLER.

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#### EMERALD BIRD OF PARADISE.

SIR,—I noticed in the *Field* (I think it was that for the last week in November) that Mr. Cross, of Liverpool, advertised a male Emerald Bird of Paradise, "said to be the only living specimen in Europe." I should be interested if any of your readers could inform me what price this bird fetched, and what became of it. I have not seen it mentioned in any of the lists of additions to the Zoological Gardens, nor in any Show Catalogue (*e*).

I recently saw a "Silver and White" Parrot advertised, which I presume was a freak of nature. I have often thought that a Class for Albino or Rare-feathered Foreign Birds, at the Palace, would prove every bit as interesting as the corresponding class for Britishers invariably is.

C. CUSHNY.

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(*e*) Mr. FULLJAMES could, perhaps, throw a little light on the matter.—A. G. B.





AMERICAN SISKIN  
(*Chrysomitris tristis*).



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THE AMERICAN SISKIN.

*(Chrysomitris tristis).*

By D. SETH-SMITH, F.Z.S.

In June of last year (1898) Mr. Swaysland, of Brighton, imported a fine pair of this species, which soon came into the possession of the present writer. They were placed in an outdoor aviary with numerous other birds, where, for two or three months, they appeared to thrive and do well, and occasionally were seen carrying about small pieces of various substances, which had been supplied as building material for any of the birds that cared to make use of it. The cock, in full summer dress of lemon-yellow and black, was one of the most conspicuous birds in the aviary, and his merry song, uttered throughout the greater part of the day, was most pleasing.

During the latter part of the summer the writer was obliged to be away from home for months together, and the care of the birds was entrusted to others: a course seldom satisfactory although often unavoidable. One day both birds were found dead upon the floor; and their skins being valued too highly for the bodies to be sent away for *post mortem* examination, the exact cause of death was never ascertained.

Although the pair above referred to lived but a short time (fortunately long enough for our artist to obtain a most charming and life-like drawing of them) it is probable that this, the so-called American Goldfinch, might live for a long time in captivity if properly treated; but it cannot be regarded as a very hardy species. As to food, it requires a variety of seed to keep it in health: probably the same treatment as is usually adopted in the case of our British Goldfinch and Siskin would generally be found to succeed with their American cousin: such seeds as thistle, linseed, hemp, rape, and canary should be

supplied, with plenty of green food, such as flowering groundsel, chickweed, etc.

Having had but a limited experience of this beautiful species, the writer may perhaps be forgiven for quoting somewhat fully from Mr. Henry Nearling's delightful book on American birds, entitled "Our Native Birds of Song and Beauty." Such a charming account of this species is therein given that it cannot fail to interest our members. He writes—"In the merry month of June we hear from early dawn till the evening falls a chorus of beautiful singing birds. The Oriole in the elm, the Song-sparrow in the rose-bushes, the Catbird in the honeysuckle, the Summer Warbler in the mock orange, the Rose-breasted Grosbeak in the trees of the woodland border, the Veery in the mossy swamp, the Bobolink in the flower-adorned meadow, the Red-wing in the reeds, the Martin in the air—all sing in jubilant notes their hymns of joy and happiness. Not earlier than the latter part of the month our lovely little Goldfinch begins to join the chorus, and by July first all the males are in full song. Their brilliant, melodious, and liquid strains are now heard from all sides. Almost all other birds are now busily engaged in feeding their young, finding rarely time for singing, except in the dusk of the evening.

"The Goldfinch, which is also known by the names of Wild Canary, Thistle-bird, Yellow-bird, and Lettuce-bird (*a*), is one of our most familiar species, being especially abundant in settled localities. Its colours are gay, its song sweet and varied, its ways and manners agreeable, innocent, and enjoyable, and its nesting-habits and its family-life highly interesting. It is, therefore, quite worthy of the love and favour with which it is regarded by all who love nature."

Farther on, the same writer observes, "In Wisconsin, I have rarely met with the first arrivals from the South before May 15th, and sometimes I have not seen them before May 25th. They usually make their appearance in large scattered flocks, which remain together until the breeding-season arrives, when they separate into pairs—this is about the middle of June."

It is interesting to read an American writer's opinion of the species as a cage-bird; he says, "As soon as the young are able to leave the nest, they are placed in a cage, and the old birds feed them until they are able to provide for themselves. Then they are taken into the house and fed like Canaries—with

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(*a*) It is, however, a true Siskin, and the name by which it is known in England, and which has been chosen for the heading of this paper, is the most appropriate.—D.S.-S.

a mixture of rape and canary-seed and, now and then, a few hempseeds. I know a Goldfinch that lived in captivity for thirteen; and another for fifteen, years. . . . The old birds rarely live longer than a year in a cage, and most of them die in the course of the first summer or in fall. In the cage, our beautiful Goldfinch proves to be rather a delicate bird, and it takes careful nursing in order to succeed with it. It shows a very varied taste in regard to its favourite kinds of seed. The best food consists of a selection of the following seeds: Canary, flax, rape, oat-grits, hemp, and lettuce-seed, generally diminishing in favour in the order named."

In full summer dress the male is pure lemon-yellow, rather more dingy on the mantle; greater wing-coverts, bastard wing, quills and primary coverts black edged with white towards the tips and round the ends. Tail feathers black with a white spot at the tip of each, and the centre ones broadly edged with white on the inner web. Upper tail coverts white. Bill orange, feet yellowish-brown.

In winter plumage the male resembles the female, except that the wings and tail are blacker with the white markings more distinct.

The adult female, in summer, is olive-brown tinged with olive-greenish above; under parts yellowish-white tinged with grey. Upper tail-coverts greyish-white. Wings and tail dusky-black, marked with white as in the male. In the winter the female becomes somewhat browner.

According to Ridgway, the young are like the adults in winter plumage but much browner, the wing markings light cinnamon and the plumage generally suffused with this colour.

"Nest a very neat cup-shaped structure, composed of compactly-woven plant-fibres, etc., lined with plant-down and other soft materials, placed in tall bushes or low trees. Eggs 3-5, .66 × .47, plain pale bluish or bluish white."

The species is said to be resident in the whole of temperate North America, although a partial migration undoubtedly takes place in the Spring and Autumn.

## PARROT NOTES.

By the Hon. and Rev. F. G. DUTTON.

*Continued from page 85.*

### AMAZONS (*Continued*).

Our Secretary has reminded me that I have not written any Parrot Notes for the last number, so I again take up my pen.

Before beginning, I should like to correct a printer's error in my last "Note." My answer about the uncertainty of Pomeranian dogs' tempers was not "Not all," but "Not at all," *i.e.*, Poms. are certain bad, or certain good, tempers. You always know where you are with a Pom., which is exactly what you do not with an Amazon, as a rule.

However, to go on with the Amazons. Having done with the "Golden-nape" and the "Double-fronted," the turn of the Common Amazon comes next. This is the "Blue-fronted" or *Chrysotis aestiva*. Few Parrots are so common: few can be better known. As to the plumage, there is no Parrot so diverse. Many other species of Parrot show hardly any difference between one specimen and another. The person who feeds them may know one Pennant or one Blue Mountain from another; but to the casual observer they must be absolutely alike. Now, the difference between two Blue-fronted Amazons can be detected by the most indifferent onlooker. Some have very little yellow on the throat, some a great deal. No Parrot is so often variegated, or throws out so many of what the dealers call "King" birds. And very few Parrots are so handsome as a well-variegated Blue-fronted Amazon. I saw last year, at Pring's shop, a beautiful bird with both wings entirely light yellow. It might have been shown as an "evenly marked" bird. Whoever may have been the purchaser could hardly have got a handsomer bird.

But though the Blue-fronted Amazon is a very hardy bird, and generally very tame, I am not inclined to class it, as a rule, as a first-rate talker. It learns to say a few things easily: it learns to sing more easily than a Grey, but it is fonder of imitating *sounds* than *words*. It can give an admirable imitation of a conversation of which you cannot make out the words. It laughs better than any Grey: it goes into fits of laughter, in which you cannot help joining, so great an effect of merriment do they produce. It can be trained to fly loose much more easily than a Grey, because all the Amazons have much greater



wing-power in proportion to their weight. An Amazon, on being first turned out, has no difficulty in flying a few yards and then stopping. A Grey Parrot, when first turned out, flies until it drops from exhaustion, so that you may have some difficulty in finding it, and it has to be out two or three days before it can be sure of settling where it wants to settle. Amazons, too, never fly far away, so that if an aviculturist can find a spot free from boys, and where he can make friends with the keeper, he may turn out Amazons with but little risk.

I do not think that, if I were going to buy a talking Parrot, I should select a Blue-fronted Amazon; but if I were going to buy one, I should choose a thick-set compact bird, which was tame, and could say a few words. Amazons are not, like Greys, silent before strangers: they are quite ready to talk to them. I know of no means of distinguishing sex, but I should choose a bird with plenty of yellow about the head. After all, a Parrot's powers of talking generally depend a good deal on its possessor's imagination, and, if the would-be purchaser has a lively imagination, I daresay a Blue-fronted would say as wonderful things as any other Parrot.

With the Blue-fronted, I would class *C. ochrocephala*, the Yellow-fronted, and *C. festiva*, the Festive Amazon. Both these are given in the British Museum Catalogue as 14·5 inches in length, and they seem to me of the same size as the Blue-fronted.

The Yellow-fronted is known by its having a round yellow spot on its forehead, while its beak is horn-colour with a reddish spot in the middle. I am not very fond of this species, and I doubt if the hen bird talks—I might almost say—at all. The cock bird seems to me to be more uncertain in its temper, and more jealous than the other Amazons—and it is noisy. Still, I think the cock bird talks quite as much as the Blue-fronted, and is not a bad talker. I fancy the cocks have a larger yellow patch than the hens: if I were buying one, I would only buy one with a large yellow patch, unless I *knew* the bird was a good talker.

The Festive Amazon seems to me a more attractive bird. My own experience has been unfavourable, but only two passed through my hands. Neither of those were tame or talked; but Dr. Greene had one which he told me was very clever and picked up words very easily. I saw one at Havre which rather tempted me. It was very tame and said a few words readily; but I did not buy it, because it had something the matter with one eye. According to the Brit. Mus. Catalogue there are two other Amazons rather like it—*C. bodini* and *C. chloronota*. I have

never seen either, and should therefore say the Festive is unmistakeable. It is all green on the back, with a ridge of brown feathers across the beak and a bright red rump. It is this bright red patch (which causes the French to call it l'Amazone á dos-rouge) which makes it so very unmistakeable. I observe that Russ gives it a poor character as a talker, but I suspect that it is a question of sex: that the birds I had, and the birds he saw, were hens, while Dr. Greene's bird was probably a cock. As I have as little idea how the sexes may be distinguished, as I have how to tell the cock Blue-fronted from the hen, I can only say that I would not buy a Festive unless I knew it could talk. But if an aviculturist should come across one which was tame, gentle and talked, he probably might buy many a worse Parrot as a talking pet.

I forgot, I had a third Festive. It was a bird all yellow, belonging to a man in a Midland County. I had it on approval as a marvellous talker, and a talker in many languages. It was very vicious, and never said a word. I wrote to the man, but could get no answer. At last I found he was in gaol. I was rather puzzled what to do. Had the bird been attractive, or even decently civil, I would have kept it until the man re-appeared. But a thoroughly vicious bird? No! (By-the-way, none of these three birds ever screamed or made any noise in particular). At last I handed it to the police, and let them settle the matter. This bird may have been a cock, because it was good-tempered with women.

Many other Amazons are about the same size as these three, to wit, Dufresne's, the Green-cheeked, *pretrei*, *lilacina*, *diademata*, *finschi*, *autumnalis*, *panamensis*. but as I have never had any of them, or known anyone who has kept them as pets, and as these notes purport to tell my experiences, I say nothing about them, and shall pass on to a smaller size of Amazon still.

I will take these smaller ones in the order in which they come in the British Museum Catalogue, and, as they are less common than the ones I have hitherto described, it may be convenient to those who have not the Catalogue by them, if I describe them.

First of all comes *Chrysotis vittata*. A specimen was exhibited at the Show held at the Crystal Palace in October, and there was a specimen the other day at the Zoological Gardens. It was so like the one at the Palace that it may have been the same. Both were very excited when one talked to them, and

bustled up to one with rather angry intentions. But it is a pretty little bird. Length about 12 inches, instead of the 14.5 to which the Yellow-fronted Amazon runs. It is green, with the edges of the feathers black, under surface lighter green, a narrow red band on the forehead. The Catalogue says the skin round the eyes is whitish; but, if I recollect right, these two had white feathers round the eyes too. There are blue feathers in the wing. Like so many Amazons, the green tail-feathers have yellowish tips, and red at the base of the inner web of the side ones; the bill is yellowish. The Catalogue says some specimens have no red at the base of the inner web of the lateral tail-feathers. Perhaps these are young ones. It seemed to me a noisy little bird, and certainly not friendly to the general public.

I see that I have missed out *Chrysotis amazonica*, which is rather a large bird, as its length runs to 13.5 inches. The Catalogue description says: "Green, under surface paler; the feathers of the hind neck edged with blackish. Forehead and eyebrows blue, vertex pale yellow, cheeks deep yellow, ear coverts grass green, bill light horn-colour. I leave out a description of that part of the plumage which is not so striking, and merely add that what is usually red in the wings of most Amazons is, in *C. amazonica*, orange, whence its English name of "the Orange-winged Amazon."

The only *amazonica* I had was one that was advertised for £4, as a very accomplished bird. It came and was quite tame, but after I had it a fortnight without its ever saying even "Polly," I returned it. I have never seen a talking one, and the species appear to me less clever than many of the smaller kinds.

*C. albifrons* I have not kept, and those specimens I have seen had nothing particular to recommend them as pets.

*C. xantholora* I have not kept, but it is the prettiest of the small Amazons. I have never seen it in a bird-shop, so it is hardly worth while describing it.

There remain *C. collaria* and *C. leucocephala*. These two are probably local varieties of the same species: *leucocephala* being the form found in the Island of Cuba, and *collaria* in Jamaica. They are about 13 inches long, and may be all three known by a white beak; the feathers being heavily edged with black, the forehead white, and the cheeks and throat rosy-red. This bird makes a very friendly little pet. Many of them learn to speak several words. They were imported in old days much more frequently than they are now. Whether they have

been destroyed, or whether they are not worth exporting, I do not know : but I have come across them in the hands of private persons, and not in bird-shops. I would much rather buy one of these than a Blue-fronted, all other points being equal, but I fear they are somewhat noisy. At present they are so seldom met with that I should certainly advise any aviculturist who had one offered him at a reasonable price, and had room—how often one's purchases are stopped by want of that, even as much as of money!—to buy it; he could always dispose of it, unless it was wilder than any I have yet seen.

And so end my "Notes" on Amazons. I wish that aviculturists who have kept any Amazons would take the trouble to correct my experiences and record theirs.

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## NOTES ON MY SHĀMAH.

By ROSIE ALDERSON.

When I first purchased my cock Shāmāh, rather more than a year ago, his plumage was very ragged and the tip of his upper mandible was broken off. His beak quickly grew again, and he is now in lovely feather and song. Since I bought him he has never had a day's illness, so perhaps these few notes on his diet may be of some interest to any member who is thinking of keeping one of these delightful pets.

Every day in the morning "Phil" has a mixture of bought insectivorous food, (I think it is only fair to the maker to give his name—Mr. Arthur, of Melksham), and grated carrot; the latter carefully washed, and peeled thinly if the outside is at all hard. During the first few months I tried crumbled sponge cake moistened, as a foundation, but found the carrot better. In the afternoon, a few cleaned ants' eggs, soaked in warm water and strained. Of course, if the weather is hot, all the old food left from the morning is taken away before it turns sour.

In addition to these, the staple articles of diet, "Phil" has a variety of live insects that he greatly appreciates. Woodlice can generally be found under old stones in rockeries, and, even so early in the summer as this, an abundance of green aphides can be brushed from the young rose shoots. We are the fortunate possessors of a large garden, in one part of which, in summer, is a long row of dahlias. On the stakes of these I place inverted flower-pots half filled with crumpled brown paper, and these shaken out every morning yield a rich harvest of scores of ear-



wigs. They may also be caught by paper being placed in the same manner among the branches of wall-fruit-trees.

Our friends are very good in providing us with house beetles—for “Phil” is a great favourite—and these, I think, are his chief delight. If a “demon” beetle trap is brought into the room he flutters wildly with excitement, and the moment his cage door is opened darts down on the trap, his head and shoulders disappearing inside, and he emerges in triumph with a struggling beetle. It is to be hoped that the poor thing cannot feel, for it is tossed about, and the legs and perhaps the head torn off before the remaining portion is swallowed—this cruel treatment is only reserved for the larger beetles, the smaller ones are eaten whole. If the hapless victim makes an attempt to get away, “Phil” enjoys it all the more: he will let it run a little way and then, jumping after it, will seize it again like a cat playing with a mouse. I must not forget to add to his *menu* a few mealworms daily, and occasionally a moth (particularly one with a good deal of down on it), makes a welcome change.

“Phil” is a most affectionate and sociable bird, and quite mopes if no one is sitting in the room with him, though with strangers he is very nervous. He delights in having a fly out of his cage, and will frequently fly on to my head or my shoulder, and if I am sewing, and do not pay him sufficient attention, he will steal my thread-ends out of pure revenge, and possibly eat one or two before they can be taken from him. He has only one trick, and perhaps it hardly deserves the name. I often carry in my pocket (much to the horror of some of my friends) a small tin pill box full of mealworms, for, in my journeys down to my bird-house, which is some distance from the house, I am followed by many small petitioners—wild Robins and Chaffinches which I have tamed. I may just mention, in passing, that one Robin, “Bob,” has scarcely missed being fed a single day for nearly three years. He follows me all over the garden, and will fly down from the highest tree when called, and feed from my hand. “Phil” knows this mealworm-box quite well, and when I bring it out and say “Two for a worm,” he will fly on my hand and give two sharp pecks at the box-lid, which is his “Open sesame!”

Let me advise anyone who thinks of keeping a *pair* of Shâmahs to get both at the same time, or not to make a pet of one before getting the other. A short time ago, thinking to give “Phil” great pleasure, I purchased a hen. She is a nice gentle little bird, but at present in very rough plumage. When she was first brought into the room “Phil” did not take much

notice of her, and, though his cage-door was open, he did not seem to care to come out, but the moment I thoughtlessly gave her a mealworm all his jealous instincts were aroused. He dashed out, and with many angry "clucks" flew straight at her cage with outstretched wings and uplifted tail, and tried to kill her through the wires. As the hen did not seem very frightened I kept her in the room for some time, but "Phil" refused to be pacified, and repeated his assaults again and again. After I had taken his rival away, it was most amusing to see how he put on all his most winning ways to make us notice him and beg forgiveness; but we felt it our duty for a time to treat him with severity, as a punishment for his unkind conduct. He tolerates his wife better now, but I dare not put them into one cage, for if I take any notice of her, or give her anything, he gets excited at once.

I think "Phil" could easily be taught to whistle tunes: he can sing the first few bars from the drawing-room music out of "Utopia" very correctly. Besides his ordinary song he has two other notes—a loud "cluck, cluck!" when vexed or frightened, and a plaintive noise like a kitten mewling, when he is getting discontented and wants someone to notice him.

In conclusion, I must not forget to add that he delights in a daily bath of cold water (the chill taken off in winter) the first thing every morning, and on hot days his cage is carried into the garden where he revels in a sun-bath, lying flat on his cage-floor with outstretched wings.

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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### ANOTHER INVITATION.

SIR,—I have read with great pleasure the most kind and cordial welcome given by Mrs. Hartley to any member who would care to visit her collection of birds. I consider this a splendid idea, and it may be the means of bringing many members together. I sincerely hope the suggestion may be carried out by all those who are interested and true bird lovers.

I myself shall be delighted, at any time, for any member to see my birds, which are in an outdoor aviary both summer and winter, unprotected.

I might add that I have among my collection a *Zosterops* which is singing just like a Canary.

(Mrs.) A. JACKSON.

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Mr. W. OAKEY, of Leicester, would also be pleased to show his collection].

## SEASONAL CHANGES OF PLUMAGE.

SIR,—The question has occurred to me, Has a bird any control over the time at which it assumes bright plumage? I am inclined to think not, yet it evidently contrives to make the bright feathers show as much as possible as soon as they begin to come, and to hide the dull ones as long as it can. Perhaps some of our members have studied the subject.

I have a Madagascar Weaver which began to grow scarlet in November, but after a few weeks, and when a very long way off full colour, it went brown again very quickly. It has now assumed the brilliant plumage and almost completed it.

A Rufous-necked Weaver, a few weeks since, went into dull plumage (though they live together in an outdoor aviary) and another Rufous-necked Weaver has remained in bright plumage for three years.

A Nonpareil, living with them, has been dull all the winter, but, I think, begins to show signs of brightening now.

Have breeders of these birds which have bright and dull times of plumage found that they gradually begin to assume bright plumage in our springtime after a few generations?

A. A. THOM.

## THE LICENSING OF BIRD-CATCHERS.

SIR,—According to Dr. Butler, the Society for the Protection of Birds is over-reaching itself by ludicrous severity, and by interfering with the liberty of Englishmen.

I can assure Dr. Butler that I do not wish to interfere with the liberty of Englishmen any more than is necessary for the protection of birds, some species of which are likely to become extinct if nothing is done (*b*).

I should like to ask Dr. Butler if he thinks it would be fair to a professional catcher and dealer if an unlicensed private individual were allowed to go out on Sundays or any other day and catch a score or so of Nightingales, Blackcaps, Garden-warblers, etc., to sell again, whilst the professional catcher and dealer were licensed. These skilful private catchers do exist, to my knowledge, and among the doctors too—my first two Nightingales I bought from a doctor for 30/-, and they both turned out to be hens or non-singing cocks, so I let both go in Epping Forest. I have bought another since, from a private individual and catcher, and he had a dozen more to sell. Why should these private individuals be let off scot-free? The Society means to do its work thoroughly, and I commend it for it.

A. JONES.

## PARROT FINCHES AND THEIR FOSTER-PARENTS.

SIR,—I have a fine pair of Parrot Finches. The hen built in a box low down in the aviary, and laid two eggs, but did not sit. The week after this she laid four more eggs in another nest box, but again did not sit.

(*b*) There is not the least doubt that nothing can be done to prevent the extinction of many species in Great Britain. The whole land is rapidly being converted into bricks and mortar. In the days of good Queen Bess nearly everyone considered it sport to snare, slaughter and eat birds of all kinds wholesale, yet there was no decrease in their numbers: let Mr. Jones and his friends ask themselves why this was.—A. G. B.

Altogether she has laid twenty-three eggs, but never sat except for one day. Having a pair of Bengalese which had laid three eggs and just begun to sit, I put four Parrot Finch eggs in their nest. I also put four Parrot Finch eggs into a Sydney Waxbills' nest, in the place of four clear eggs which had been sat on for eight days. One young Parrot Finch was hatched by the Bengalese, and it lived a week. The other eggs in the Bengalese nest were clear. The Sydney Waxbills deserted their nest at the end of nine days—two of the eggs contained young,

The Bengalese laid again, two eggs, and had just begun to sit, when I put five Parrot Finches' eggs with their own. In fourteen days four young Parrot Finches were hatched, and are now being fed by the Bengalese and are doing well (*c*).

I have some Parrot Finch eggs left, and am saving them to put under some other finch.

The young Parrot Finch has green beads round the gape, of a glittering appearance (*d*).

I think it is wise to keep a few pairs of Bengalese in readiness, to hatch the eggs of valuable birds that will not sit, such as the Violet-eared Waxbill.

I. CARTMELL.

#### FOOD FOR WATERFOWL.

SIR,—Would you kindly tell me what is the proper food for Waterfowl (Mandarin and Tufted Ducks). The birds are pinioned, but have a free range of the garden, and a piece of water to swim on.

(Miss) R. ALDERSON.

*The following reply was sent to Miss Alderson :*

The best staple food for Ornamental Ducks is a mixture of equal parts of buckwheat, barley, and wheat, given in water. Bread thrown into the water is also much appreciated, as a rule.

The Tufted Ducks obtain most of their food by diving, and are very fond of the green weeds that usually grow on the bottom of ponds, as well as various aquatic insects and crustaceans. It would be a good plan to throw some grain on the surface of the pond ; this would sink, and the Tufted Ducks would obtain it in the natural way by diving.

D. SETH-SMITH.

#### CATCHING A TARTAR.

SIR,—I think the subjoined account of an escaped Macaw will amuse the readers of our Magazine.

Some months since, my friend Mr. Marsden managed, by accident, to let one of his Macaws get loose. I was lunching with him soon after, and he gave me the following laughable and graphic account of the escape and capture.

(*c*) It will be interesting to hear if the young Parrot Finches are successfully reared by the Bengalese.—D. S.-S.

(*d*) See pages 20 and 26 of this volume.—ED.



"I was clearing out the brute's cage," he said, "when somehow he managed to slip out, and before I knew it, there he was sailing far overhead. Ah, but he did look grand!" said my friend, "as he went over the spire of All Souls'. I gave him up for lost, but thought I would advertise for him, and offer a reward. Some days later, I heard that a Macaw had been captured in a distant part of Leeds: so I went to see if it was my old friend. After a lot of trouble I found the house, and on asking if they had a Macaw, they informed me that some workmen had caged some kind of a *foreign hawk*. The sufferings of those poor fellows in effecting the capture appeared to have been appalling. I asked where the bird was," said Mr. Marsden, "the woman of the house told me it was in *the best bedroom*, of which it held possession, *as no one dared* to enter the room. When I entered, there, sure enough, was my old friend; but," said Mr. Marsden, with a sly twinkle of the eye, "you never saw such a mess as that room was in—a grand bedstead nearly in pieces, and the other furniture damaged past repair. I asked the woman what she had fed the bird on? Her reply was, 'Please, Sir, we gave him *cats' meat*, as he seemed some sort of a *hawk*.' And, sure enough, the poor fellow had been existing on this strange diet for several days. However," said Mr. Marsden, "I was jolly glad to get him back; I had a big account to settle with the workmen for *damage in capture*, and for ruined furniture, besides the advertised reward."

The whole story struck me as so intensely comic—the best bedroom given up to the Macaw, and the cats' meat diet—that I venture to send it to the Magazine in the hope that it will make my readers laugh as it did me.

C. D. FARRAR.

### MIMICRY BY BIRDS IN A WILD STATE.

SIR,—I was for many years in India but never heard a Wild Parrakeet imitate any other bird. The Indian Skylark, Crested Lark, and Singing Bush-lark are all imitative, and I should say invariably introduce the notes of other birds into their songs. I have heard an English Skylark imitate a Chaffinch.

Last year I had an Indian Grey-winged Blackbird (*Merula bulbul*) which I disposed of, and this year I was astonished at hearing some of his notes proceeding from an English Blackbird close to the house, and I hear them every day.

One of the Starlings which frequent the chimneys of my house, imitated a Blackbird this year long before the Blackbirds began singing.

The Butcher-bird in India is also a mimic, and I believe the American Mocking-bird is so.

With reference to this subject, I have often wondered if any birds in the Counties frequented by Nightingales improve their songs by the introduction of Nightingale's notes. Nightingales are not supposed to come to Devonshire, but they make an exception sometimes in favour of Honiton. The year before last I heard one, and this year there are at least two to be heard, day and night, close to my house.

C. HARRISON.

## THE BLUE SUGAR-BIRD ; THE EMERALD BIRD OF PARADISE.

SIR,—I am sorry that my business arrangements have, for some time, prevented my replying to the many interesting queries which have of late appeared in our Magazine, and I am afraid some even of the direct enquiries addressed to me on bird matters have, for the same reason, been allowed to pass without reply.

In the May number of the Magazine, however, there are so many items that require attention, that I have been impelled to write a few words.

After expressing the great pleasure which I have in congratulating the Society upon having secured the services of such an artist as Mr. Smit, and of such a firm as Mintern Brothers for the exquisite reproductions of the artist's sketches, I will begin at the beginning, and as I am doubtless one of those to whom Dr. Butler refers in the first paragraph of his interesting article on the Blue Sugar-bird, I will endeavour to supplement his paper with a few remarks from actual experience of the *Dacnis cayana* in captivity. My first specimen was a hen, and a bird of this sex would appear, to any other than an expert, to be of quite a different species from the cock bird. The general plumage of the hen is of a bright metallic green, while the body plumage of the cock quite justifies the popular designation "Blue Sugar-bird," and the only fault possible to be found in the illustration is the one pointed out by Dr. Butler, that it is, perhaps, not blue enough. My birds were fed upon fruit as a staple diet: oranges, grapes, bananas, pears, etc., as might be obtainable from time to time. They were also supplied with sponge cake moistened with scalded milk, and a mixture of steamed ant's cocoons, yolk of egg, and cream cheese. Of the latter item they were extremely fond, and invariably picked out the pieces as soon as their food was given to them. (I have found cream cheese chopped fine a very valuable addition to the food for delicate insectivorous birds in captivity). Two or three mealworms daily were also offered, but these were not always eaten. My birds never seemed to ail until the last minute. Each seemed in perfect health up to the time it was found dead in its cage. It seems that such birds as these, and the more delicate insectivorous British birds, get food in freedom such as we are unable to successfully imitate in captivity (I anticipate Dr. Butler's comment that birds do not get cream-cheese when at liberty) and that the fruit we are able to offer the fruit-eating foreign birds is a very poor substitute for the ripe fruit and tropical insects they have been taken away from. Any one who has eaten ripe bananas and ripe oranges, fresh from the tree, will appreciate this theory.

I am obliged to say that I think Dr. Butler's interesting article upon the Sugar-bird is entirely spoilt by his last paragraph. To reason that because a Blue Robin, a Pekin Robin, and a Blackbird have been kept in health upon a certain food it should be tried upon such birds as the *Dacnis cayana* is surely absurd(*f*). The three birds named will live upon almost anything, and the *Liothrix* can be kept nearly entirely upon seed. Does this make seed a desirable food for a Sugar-bird? In thousands of cottages in England Blackbirds are kept in health and song on scraps from the table, supplemented by snails and earthworms. How long would a *Dacnis*

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(*f*) Any member of the Society who carefully reads my article on the Blue Sugar-bird will note that I did not recommend my regular mixture, as part of the dietary suitable for that bird, on the grounds stated by Mr. Fulljames; but on the ground that it agreed with Tanagers and *Zosterops*. I mentioned the other species to prove that there could be nothing injurious in the mixture as has been asserted.—A. G. B.

live on this? In my bird-rooms three distinct qualities of soft-food at least are given. Such birds as Nightingales, Blackcaps, Bearded and Crested Tits, the various Warblers, and such of the fruit-eaters as will take it, are supplied with the mixture above mentioned as having been given to the *Dacnis*, with the addition of chopped lettuce, groundsel, watercress or other greenstuff. The aviaries are provided with the mixture I have before recommended in the Magazine (ground biscuit, crissel, ants' cocoons, yolk of egg, dried flies, breadcrumbs, and boiled potato or grated carrot). The Thrushes, Blackbirds, and such-like get a proportion of the latter mixture supplemented (considerably) by ground dog-biscuit or more breadcrumbs and potato. Some discrimination in offering food to soft-bills seems to me to be absolutely necessary, as, while the delicate birds would starve or die of indigestion on the Thrushes' food, the Thrushes would burst themselves on the first-named mixture.

To proceed to the letter of Mrs. Hartley; I have pleasure in following Dr. Butler's example by saying that my aviaries are always open to the inspection of members, by appointment of course. The Hon. and Rev. F. G. Dutton has already written an instructive and interesting article on the Parrot section of my birds, and some member of journalistic tendencies and with a penchant for other foreign birds or "Britishers," might, perchance, find material in such a visit for another article for our Magazine.

I have no objection in complying with Dr. Butler's hint in his footnote to Mr. Cushny's enquiry *re* Emerald Bird of Paradise. Upon hearing from Mr. Cross that he had the bird, I went to Liverpool to see it. When I arrived it was, to all appearances, healthy, and was feeding freely upon chopped beef and mealworms, and I was told it would eat ordinary "insectivorous food." The price asked was £100. After considerable bargaining I paid £60 for it, and brought it home next morning. When I got it home, I took the bird out of its cage with the intention of washing its peculiarly beautiful wing coverts, and at once knew that I had made a mistake in not "handling" it before purchase. The bird was little more than a skeleton, and I knew at once that it would be a miracle if I could preserve it. The meat diet had "scoured" it almost to death. Unremitting attention was bestowed upon it without avail. With me it absolutely refused meat, but ate freely of hot-house grapes and mealworms. Small cockroaches it would also take, but day by day it got gradually weaker until, in about a fortnight, a series of fits, most painful to witness, ended its miserable life.

I believe only one other had ever been imported into England, and this, I understand, was brought by a gentleman in his own yacht from the Arrow (or Aroo) Islands (*e*). These Islands form a small group immediately to the South of Papua (New Guinea) in lat. 6°-7° S. I believe the only trade with the Islands is in cocoa-nuts and Bird of Paradise SKINS!! The natives, it appears, have no notion of attempting to keep the birds in captivity, and it is only by the merest accident that a live specimen can be obtained. Although my experience with my one bird was so particularly unfortunate, I have little hesitation in saying that if the bird could be provided with suitable food, *not* raw beef, there seems to be no reason why it could not be successfully imported and successfully kept.

HENRY J. FULLJAMES.

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(*e*.) Generally spelt "Aru."—A.G.B.

## THE MAGAZINE.

The members will doubtless have remarked the fact that the April and May issues consisted of twelve pages only, which is less than ever before, since the first year of the Society. The sole reason for this was that I had so little suitable matter in hand for publication.

If the magazine is to be a continued success, it is essential that the members should be more active in contributing to its pages than they have been recently. I shall be glad to receive articles and letters for publication from any members, especially from some of those who have hitherto written little or nothing for the magazine. We are very much indebted to the faithful little band of regular contributors, but it is unfair to expect them to do the whole of the work. I should also be glad to hear from several who *used* to write for the magazine but who have not done so lately.

HORATIO R. FILLMER.

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 THE LATE SIR H. S. BOYNTON, BART.

The Society has lost a very able and experienced aviculturist through the death on the 11th April last, after a long illness, of its esteemed Vice-President, Sir HENRY S. BOYNTON, Bart.

He had an interesting collection of living birds within his beautiful grounds at Burton Agnes, in East Yorkshire, keeping, at various times, Emus, Rheas, a fine lot of Ornamental Pheasants, most of the British Fresh-water Wild Ducks and Geese, Eagle Owls, and a very fine pair of Golden Eagles the female of which laid a clutch of eggs during her owner's illness.

Sir Henry, for several summers up to 1897, had been in the habit of bringing back with him from Norway, after the fishing season, various interesting birds from that country, including Eagle and Snowy Owls, Siberian Jays, and usually a fine lot of young Gos-hawks, sometimes as many as six or eight in number. He spared no trouble in rearing these birds in their own country, and in bringing them across the North Sea: and, being in the pink of condition, and often already partly trained, the Gos-hawks used, when their education was completed a little later, to afford their captor, and several other falconers in different parts of England, excellent sport with rabbits and other quarry.

But it is as a successful keeper of the insectivorous birds that Sir Henry excelled. His system was, in the case of the more delicate kinds, to absolutely exclude all farinaceous food, giving nothing to the Mocking Birds, Shamas, Nightingales, Blue and Rock Thrushes, and Blackcaps, but ants' eggs, Carl Capelle food, preserved yolk of egg, and a few currants, the above moistened and given as a crumbling paste. He considered a supply of coarse gritty sand a matter of great importance; and his cages were all roomy, allowing the inmates plenty of room for exercise. To this treatment, and to the above diet especially, he attributed the fact that his insectivorous birds always seemed in the best of condition, moulted clean, and that they were absolutely free from those troublesome fits that so often shorten the lives of these more or less delicate species when kept in confinement.



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THE CORDON BLEU.

*Estrilda phænicotis.*

By REGINALD PHILLIPPS.

My early experiences of this species were limited to a Small Birds' birdroom—long since closed—in which they were practically lost amid a number of Waxbills, Mannikins, and the like, all flying loose together. Under these conditions they seemed amiable, inoffensive little creatures, without much character or spirit; but, given healthy specimens to start with, I found no difficulty in keeping them alive and well.

I had not, however, tried the Cordon Bleu in the garden; and, on the 15th February, 1898, noticing a nice looking pair, I purchased them forthwith, with a view to giving them a trial of outdoor life as soon as the weather became warmer.

By the 15th April following they were in perfect health and condition; and on that day I loosed them in the garden. On and from the 17th May, I noticed that the male had become exceedingly savage, attacking all birds (but see exception below), irrespective of size, that approached the particular region over which he had proclaimed a protectorate; and I found that a nest was being built among some Virginia creeper which covers an upright structure in the aviary, on the almost due east side, five feet from the ground. During the spring and summer, the Long-tailed Grassfinches (five) did much mischief, appropriating quite a number of other birds' nests for nesting or squatting purposes. One pair tried very hard to obtain possession of the Cordon Bleus' nest; but the male Cordon fought like a little demon, and succeeded in keeping off his formidable antagonists. This same pair hovered about and menaced the Cordons' nest all through the summer and autumn, at one time building a nest just four inches above it, measuring from the nearest points; and they took possession of it the instant the Cordons were removed to warmer quarters for the winter.

The first clutch of eggs came to nothing.

In July they nested again, but without any feature of general interest coming under my notice. I fear I hardly thought of them.

Early in August these birds were again nesting: on the 3rd of that month I noticed them mating.

On October 7th, on peeping into the aviary from a window, I found *three* Cordon Bleus feeding below me. So nearly alike in size were they that, had I not known that there had been but two in the garden, it would not have occurred to me that one was a young bird. Doubtless I had seen this young bird before, but without noticing it. The young Cordon seemed to be as long and as large as his parents, though actually he was less bulky. The blue seemed as brilliant as that of his father: he was much more brilliant than his mother. The beak was pinky white merging into black at the tip, and the crimson ear-patch did not appear until later, but otherwise he was practically in the plumage of the adult male. From that time I kept my eye on him. Only once did I see him fed, and that was by his father. At first his baby note was occasionally uttered, and this was not unlike the squeak of the young Parrot Finch.

The parents later went to nest for the fourth time; but the leaves of the Virginia creeper were falling, and soon the nest was left fully exposed. One day there was a great uproar in the aviary, caused by some dozen birds who had become strangely excited at the sight of the nest and its occupant, and were hovering around it, the little mother, greatly concerned, hopping nervously about in the rear of the mob. Suddenly the male darted out from the nest at his nearest foe and was back again—all in a flash: to have entered into combat with one bird would have left the eggs exposed to the depredations of the others, and he was too wary for that. I drove the birds away, and the attack was not renewed. These eggs likewise came to nothing.

To what extent these numerous failures were due to the cold, or to the disturbances, I cannot say, but doubtless the cold had a good deal to do with it. It was not until quite late in the autumn that I became aware that a pair of innocent-looking Bearded Tits were inveterate egg-stealers: possibly they may have had a finger in the pie. It is curious, but not one of the birds ever attempted to defend its nest from their snake-like approaches, which I had witnessed on many occasions without taking in the full significance of their movements.

All the Cordons' nests were independent domed dry-grass-

lined - with - feathers affairs built in the Virginia creeper, in practically the same spot, the later eggs being laid in a nest attached to but just below the first, perhaps a trifle more protected from the rain, and with the aperture more difficult of detection.

The male sat on the eggs during the greater part of the day: when the nest was in danger he always seemed to be in it. I think usually the female took a spell the first part of the morning; at night, both, I suppose, slept in the nest. In the last nest doubtless they were joined at night by the young bird, for in the garden the father was never seen to drive his son.

The spirit and bravery of this bird were a feature in the character of the species which was quite new to me. During the winter they have been quiet and peaceable with all birds but the little son.

All three passed the winter in the house, and are still alive and well. They never associated with the other birds, but kept much to themselves. Not that, as a rule, they kept all together. The parents were inseparable, sitting side by side on a tall eucalyptus tree; they kept quite quiet, wisely regarding the winter as a season of rest; they had done their work right valiantly, and were recuperating. Not so the baby. Like other silly young people, he has been wanting to nest for some months, and generally sat in another tall eucalyptus tree, opposite his parents, singing away to the wife of his imagination,—for which tomfoolery he occasionally received a whack over the head from his sober-minded pater.

One day, an interesting conversation took place in the eucalyptus tree, between the father and mother, of which I may venture to give a translation for the benefit of those who are not conversant with the language of this species:—

“Dad.” “Well, Dove?” “I’ve been thinking, Dad.” “Don’t be silly, Dove.” “I do believe that you and I have done something that no Cordon has ever done before.” “Think so, Dove?” “Who ever heard of a Cordon rearing a baby in this shivering country, eh, Dad!” “Perhaps not, Dove. What does the *Avicultural* say?” “Says that the babies all die off like flies; s’pose, Dad, it’s too cold for the feathering, or they don’t mix the pap proper.” “Aha! getting conceited in your old age, my Dove.” “Well, now; just look at him! was there ever such a Bleu? and as like his Dad as two Cordons.” “Ahem!”

“Dad.” “Yes, Dove?” “We must get a wife for our Little Boy Blue.” “Cold, isn’t it, Dove?” “All the more need

of a wife, Dad ; how would you like to be left all alone in the cold ! ” “ True for you, Dove. ” “ And, Dad, we must teach him how to hatch eggs. ” “ Then you’ll be a *granny*, Dove. ” “ Hum ; and he’s no business to be making a granny of me : more like his sister. ” “ But he can’t get on without a wife, Dove. ” “ Not so sure ; she mightn’t agree with him. Shouldn’t like our Little Boy Blue to be hen-pecked. ” “ But the *cold*, Dove ; the *cold*. ” “ *Bother* the cold, Dad. ” “ Let’s snooze over it, Dove. ” “ Let’s. ” And they snoozed.

On the 23rd January, 1899, I had a view of the two males together in an exceptionally good light. In their colourings they were practically identical—with one exception. Not only was the ear-patch of the father of a much deeper and richer colour than that of the son, but it was much larger, probably twice as large. At the time (June) that I am writing, however, the young bird seems the more brilliant of the two—he is absolutely perfect.

I have obtained a wife for him. The bride was received with much spitefulness by the old mother ; but this is rather characteristic of mothers-in-law generally.

The four birds are now in the garden. The old parents have settled down very quietly in their old quarters ; but alas for the vanity and conceit of young people ! The young couple built a large, untidy, Sparrow-like nest at the very top of a poplar tree, in the most conspicuous and exposed place in the whole aviary ; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that nest,—and in a few days it was nothing but a sodden, shapeless mass of rubbish. They have learned an important lesson of life, however, more quickly and thoroughly than their masters often do, for they have since gone to nest in a quiet secluded spot under a shed.

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## LORD DERBY’S PARRAKEET.

A pair of Parrakeets, of especial interest to aviculturists, on account of their great rarity, have recently been acquired by the Zoological Society and are now located in the Parrot-house of the Society’s Gardens. These are the first examples of the Derbian Parrakeet that have ever occupied the Gardens. In fact only one previous example appears to have been known. This bird, from which the species was named, found its way into Lord Derby’s aviaries at Knowsley, where it lived for some time.



After its death it was preserved for the Derby Museum, at Liverpool, where it is now to be seen. An excellent coloured plate of this, the type specimen, was published in the "Proceedings" of the Zoological Society for the year 1850, together with a description of the bird by Mr. Louis Fraser. The following is an extract from his communication, dated November 11th, 1850. "The first specimen to which I would wish to draw the attention of the Society, is a Parrakeet of large size, which I propose calling *Palæornis derbianus*. . . . The specimen has been for many years in this collection, and I have chosen for its specific name that of its noble owner. The species is easily distinguished from all other members of the genus by its large size and the colours of the bill, head and breast."

Although much larger, the Derbian Parrakeet has many points of resemblance to the Banded or Javan Parrakeet (*P. fasciata*); it differs greatly however from that species in the colour of the breast, which is an exquisite lilac in *P. derbyana* and decidedly vinous in *P. fasciata*, the head of the rarer species is also much bluer; and Count Salvadori has pointed out another important difference in the colour of the under wing-coverts, which are vinous in *P. derbyana* and green in *P. fasciata*.

The following is a short description of the colouring of *P. derbyana*: Upper parts light green; a broad moustache on the lower part of the cheeks, forehead and lores, black; crown and ear-coverts violet-blue; underparts lilac; bill black.

The species is said to inhabit the interior of China.

The two birds now in the Gardens are remarkably fine specimens and there would appear to be every prospect of their thriving. They are not so bright in colour as Wolf's drawing in the "Proceedings," but they are probably still immature.

The acquisition of birds of such extraordinary rarity is a matter for sincere congratulation, and they are very well worth a visit from all who are interested in this group of Old World Parrakeets.

D. SETH-SMITH.

## NESTING OF THE DHYAL.

By the Rev. C. D. FARRAR.

The Dhyal is very seldom imported into England, and, when he is, always commands a high price. It is nearly always the cocks that come over as in the case of so many other species. The cock Dhyal is like a miniature English Magpie, brilliant black and white, and is no doubt nearly related to the Shâmah, as the two species quarrel abominably. Dhyals are very

quarrelsome birds with their own kind, and to keep two cocks together will mean speedy death to one.

The hen Dhyal is the rarest of rare birds ; she is smaller and slighter than her mate ; and where he is black she is a delicate lavender.

I was fortunate enough when up in London last autumn to secure five Dhyals, just as they came off the ship, and one of them was a hen. It was a case of take all or none, so I took all.

They were wonderfully tame, and I think consisted of an old cock and his four nestlings ; as one was much larger than any of the others.

On reaching home, I had to cage off three of the cocks separately to prevent murder ; the pair I let go in a big indoor aviary, where they soon came into magnificent feather and where they have remained ever since. Two of the cocks I sold, and I reserved the odd one in case of accidents, so as to have two strings to my bow.

One day in May when I was showing my birds to a brother fancier, I was going to point out the hen Dhyal as the rarest of my possessions, when to my horror I could not see her anywhere. I feared she must be dead or had slipped out unknown to me and got lost. After looking most carefully all round the aviary and when about to give up the hunt in despair, I suddenly espied a long tail sticking out of a nest box. At first it gave me a horrid turn as I thought she had crept into a box to die there ; as I had no suspicion of nesting. On getting a chair to look I was intensely relieved to see the tail move, so I knew it was all right and a case of eggs. Of course I had to have a look (was it not excusable if rash ?) I seized my opportunity when Mrs. Dhyal was off feeding, and to my joy found three eggs.

They are rather small for the size of the bird, pale sea-green in colour, heavily blotched with chocolate at the bigger end, and rounded in shape. The hen sat admirably and hatched out two young birds, the remaining egg was clear.

The young ones when fledged just resembled the old birds, but were very yellow at the base of the beak ; and were of the male persuasion.

I fed on mealworms and black 'clocks.'

Later, the youngsters were both killed by the cock ; one on one day, the other on the next, *on the floor*.

I was of course sorry in a way, but these things will happen, and cock Dhyals are very *quarrelsome* !!! This is by way of consolation.

They were two grand young birds, and I am sure the cock slew them out of jealousy ; though he evidently is of the opinion of Horace : “Nec pueros coram populo Medea trucidat.” He must have done the deed ; as there are nothing but tiny finches in the aviary.

They are busy with a new nest, and this time I shall remove Master Dhyal as soon as the eggs are laid, as though he is useful up to that time and very ornamental, he is decidedly blood-thirsty to budding young cocks, and I don't believe he takes any share in the feeding ; at least I never saw him feed.

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## REVIEW.

*Captive Song-Birds. A pamphlet issued by the Society for the Protection of Birds. (No. 31).*

It may be questioned whether it is not waste of time to notice this, or any of the leaflets issued by a Society whose object evidently is to put an end to aviculture ; but the present one is so monstrous in its demands, and so silly in its assertions, that it can hardly be passed over without comment ; if only to show to what lengths fictitious humanitarianism and fanaticism will lead their votaries.

The opening and closing lines of the leaflet are practically opposed to the study of all birds in captivity ; and the difference between keeping a bird in a cage measuring only a few cubic inches and in an extensive aviary are regarded as representing mere “degrees of questionable treatment.” The argument, if such it can be called, that because a bird is fitted for a life of freedom in the open-air, it must necessarily suffer and be miserable when its liberty is more or less restricted, is one that nobody familiar with birds could have used : it is well-known that many birds, when they escape from captivity, soon miss the comforts and luxuries of aviary- or cage-life, and voluntarily return to it.

The writer hints that but few species become habituated to captivity, and he unblushingly asserts that the life is an unhealthy one. As a matter of fact, there are few species which have not been habituated to captivity amongst those which have been kept ; and probably none which could not be. As to the unhealthiness of cage-birds, what evidence has been collected on the subject tends to show that they live far longer, and exhibit infinitely more perfect plumage, when properly looked after in an aviary, than they ever do in a wild state.

Whatever the writer may imagine, and he seems more full of theory than fact, no bird will sing when it feels ill : it must be what the students of bird-song call 'stout' before it will sing at all. Song in birds is believed to have originated in shouts of defiance, one male singing against another ; it is now certainly used to bring the hen into subjection. If no hen be present and yet the male sings, he must be in abundant vigour and unable to contain himself.

One of the most ignorant observations made by the writer of this reprehensible pamphlet, is to the effect that birds cannot be studied properly in aviaries ; but only in their wild state. The truth is that many birds can be properly studied in no other manner than in aviaries. Many scientific collectors in many years have frequently failed to discover a solitary fact as to the method of nidification, the colour and number of eggs, etc., of a bird ; yet, when transferred to an aviary, the whole of the bird's life has been laid bare. The study of birds in a wild state may even be misleading : it led Charles Dixon to the false conclusion that inherited instinct was a myth, and that birds built their nests in imitation of those wherein they were born ; whereas aviculture proved conclusively that, after hundreds of generations of caged life, a bird turned loose in a large aviary immediately constructed the nest of its remote ancestors : even the songs and call-notes of birds heard in a state of freedom are imperfectly heard and often incorrectly rendered by naturalists ; and doubtless, where two species are together in a thicket, the notes of one are often mistaken for those of the other.

The final assertion—that the case of Canaries differs from that of other cage-birds, yet nevertheless sets a bad example and encourages a "detestable trade"—is really almost too absurd. The writer fails utterly to see that the rule which applies to wild birds, must apply to all birds which have been originally wild ; then, when he includes Canaries in his reprobation of aviculture, he does not see that (to be consistent) he is bound to include Pigeons and all kinds of domesticated Fowls. Nay, more, I must insist that, if it be cruel for man to "have dominion over the fowl of the air," it is equally cruel for him to keep in subjection any living creature ; and I am not sure that he ought not himself (in that case) to return to a condition of irresponsible savagery. Of a truth anyone who could calmly swallow such nonsense as the writer of "Captive Song-birds" solemnly indites, cannot be intellectually far removed from that early condition of his species.

A. G. BUTLER.



## CORRESPONDENCE.

## BIRD NOTES.

SIR,—I have a pair of Chinese Ring-necked Pheasants. The hen has laid to-day (June 14) her thirty-fifth egg this season. Is not this a record number for one bird? (a)

I have a hybrid between a German Fancy Pigeon and a Zanzibar Half-collared Dove, a most beautifully-marked cock bird. This has paired with a hen Barbary Dove, and has had several nests, but the eggs are always unfertile.

If any of our members are near Sydenham, I shall be pleased, any afternoon, for them to see my collection, but should prefer (like my friend and neighbour, Dr. Butler) a previous appointment. Perhaps Dr. Butler might have been thinking of my experience, which may be interesting to our readers.

Some three years ago, my birds were sent to a Foreign Bird Show at an Exhibition in the North of London. Amongst the large crowds of visitors, I made the acquaintance of a well-dressed gentleman who seemed greatly interested in foreign birds. He came several times in the twelve days the Exhibition was held, and left his card with me, asking permission to call at Sydenham to see my aviaries. He came, and the second time brought a lady with him; but as it was too late to see the birds he said he would call again, which he did, one wet afternoon. Unfortunately, for me, while in the aviary, a friend, who was returning home to South Africa, came to wish me good-bye. I left him in the aviary, saying he had better wait until the rain had left off; he left a short time after, calling at the house for his umbrella, and, with many thanks, leaving word with the servant that he hoped to call and see me again.

The next day I missed a pair of Parson Finches—sometime before I imported from Queensland 60 Gouldian Finches, with several fine Parson Finches, these were all in one large cage. My man could not account for their disappearance. I was then a little suspicious of my visitor, and found he had stolen a small travelling cage, 10 Gouldians, and the pair of Parson Finches—the servant noticed he had a small parcel under his arm, done up in a newspaper. We tried to trace them, but in vain: the name was a false one.

Some time after, at the West London Police Court, a person was sentenced to six months imprisonment for robbery. I then found that he was the one who had stolen the birds, and all that was left was one Parson Finch. This well-dressed gentleman with light kid gloves was a smart London thief.

The greater part of my birds will be at the same place next month—Agricultural Hall, Islington, July 24th to August 8th—at the Triennial Exhibition held there. I am afraid I may be a little suspicious, this time, of inviting friends to Sydenham—especially if they are fashionably dressed in light overcoat, silk hat, and light kid gloves.

JAMES B. HOUSDEN.

(a) Mr. Housden informs me that, since he penned these notes, the bird has continued to lay daily, the number of eggs being now about fifty.—A. G. B.

A hen Pheasant will frequently lay over fifty eggs.—E. G. B. M.-W.

SIR,—I have been wondering what luck in breeding members of the Avicultural Society on your side of the Channel have had this year? Better, I hope, than myself. Perhaps some will kindly give their results in the magazine. Except Redrumps, I have not had a single bird hatched (that I know of) of any description. My Many-colours have done nothing yet, and are now moulting. I lost my hen Turquoise a month or two ago and, not being able to get another, fear breeding this Parrakeet is not very likely, with me, this year. My New Zealands have done nothing at all, although they appear to be in the best of health, and are not moulting. I had about 18 eggs laid by two Golden-crowned New Zealand Parrakeets between January and the beginning of April—at several times—and as both birds sat and all the eggs were clear, I conclude I have two hens instead of a pair. A pair of Yellow Budgerigars in one of my aviaries have not made a start yet. Small birds, Finches, etc., are doing absolutely nothing, and of these I have lost a good many. I fancy the peculiar weather we have had is chiefly the cause of so much non-success in breeding, and the losses of the small birds. The early part of the year was too mild, and probably brought the birds too soon into nesting condition; then followed cold, and checked them, causing death to some, and upsetting breeding operations with others. On the whole, my losses have been greater, and breeding results less, this season than in any other since I have kept birds.

I had too fine cock Redrumps leave the nest last month, and the parents have four young again two of which seem to be hens: but they are scarcely fledged enough to tell exactly. The old cock acted again this year in precisely the same manner as last—he commenced maltreating the young of the first nest as soon as the hen was about to lay her second clutch, and before they could feed themselves. I had to take him out of the cage; and the hen laid, without him, five eggs, four of which were good and hatched. The two first young were removed a few days before the second lot hatched, and the old cock was put back to the hen again; he is feeding with her as if nothing had happened. I suppose he is used to be thus dealt with, for he seems to know what is coming when he misbehaves himself toward his young and I go to take him away.

I have at present a fresh pair of Australian Crimson Finches—the cock imported and the hen aviary-bred—having lost my old pair, “the fighters,” during the bad weather. They are birds of a different disposition from the other pair, not such bullies, and are on the best of terms with each other, which was not the case with the first pair—the cock chased and fought the hen whenever he had the chance. I have come to the conclusion that some pairs are more pugnacious than others, and the species is generally addicted to worry other birds lodged with them. I should not care to put other birds of their size, still less smaller ones, in their company, except in a large aviary containing plenty of bushes for shelter from their chasing and attacks.

A. SAVAGE.

#### THE AGE OF CAGE-BIRDS.

SIR,—With regard to the age to which little foreign birds live in captivity, I have an Avadavat flying about in my bird-room which I bought in August, 1892; it had then been some time in captivity and was quite tame. It was (until a short time ago—when it met with an accident) in beautiful plumage and brilliant colour, only getting a little greyish about the head.

(Miss) E. E. WEST.

## THE STORY OF A BLUE ROBINS' NEST.

SIR,—As I see you invite members, who have not hitherto done so, to write something for the magazine, I wonder if the story of my Blue Robins' nest would be of any interest. Perhaps someone who has kept these birds will kindly tell me if my experience is the usual one.

I have a handsome pair which have been in my possession a year-and-a-half. Last summer the hen laid four eggs, coloured a pretty greenish blue, and sat for some time, but with no result. This year, towards the end of May, when I began to hope the cold winds were over, I again fastened up the nest—a cigar box—in their cage, and provided hay, bass, moss, etc., the birds were highly delighted, and at once set to work carrying the hay, etc. They spent very little time over the nest, however, but the hen immediately began to lay. On the 1st June, as nearly as I could judge, she began to sit, and sat more or less diligently, but would often come off when I went into the room, to see if I had not some mealworms for her. I always gave her some, and she would then, generally, return to her duties; but sometimes remained off quite a long time, taking exercise and amusing herself, so that I did not much expect a favourable result. The cock bird was very attentive, and rarely ate any mealworms himself while his wife was sitting, but would carefully kill them and then hand them over to her—she seemed capable of swallowing an unlimited number.

On the morning of the 13th of June, thinking it just possible there *might* be a young bird, I gave them a few extra mealworms, plenty of ants' cocoons, and a fresh dish of their usual food (Abrahams' mixture and preserved yolk, mixed with breadcrumbs and made slightly damp). I then proceeded to attend to the wants of the other birds, but, hearing an unusual noise, returned to my Robins to see what was taking place, and there was Mr. Robin flying in an excited state about the cage, flapping his beautiful wings and uttering little cries of joy and triumph, while he dangled *something* in his beak with which he appeared to wish to *feed* his wife. The something proved to be his first-born child! Mrs. Robin did not seem to quite approve of the performance, and, with open beak, flew to the rescue, saying plainly "Give the baby to *me* Robert, you are too rough." She then proceeded to try to take it from him, and, thinking the nestling would be torn to pieces, I interfered, and it fell to the floor of the cage—quite dead, of course. It was a nice fat little thing—I am not sure if it had ever been fed—it may have had a little preserved yolk. I tried to catch the cock and take him away, but the cage being large (3ft. long by 3ft. high) I found it impossible, without frightening the birds too much, so left the eggs to their fate. The hen then returned to her nest, and, later in the day, hatched another poor little nestling, with which the parents, no doubt, went through the same Punch-and-Judy performance, for I found it dead at the bottom of the cage (no attempt had been made to feed this one).

Next morning, on taking out the nest, I found another egg, with a bird apparently alive, but I thought it might as well be drowned as share the fate of the others, so I put it in water. There were still two more eggs, making five in all. The parent birds seemed very glad to have no further trouble, and, as soon as the nest was gone, both at once took a bath—*eggs* were all very well, but *babies* quite a different thing!

When the nest-box was taken down, there was nothing in it but a few strands of hay twisted round: they had taken out all the stuff they put

in it at first—it is a wonder the eggs were not broken, as they could roll about on the bottom of the box.

Is it usual for Blue Robins to treat their families in this inhuman manner, or was there something wrong in my feeding or management?

My birds are very tame, and my presence never seems to frighten them.

(Miss) E. E. WEST.

### THE MAGAZINE.

SIR,—I see you complain of want of subject-matter for the magazine.

Could not members record their acquisitions, if they got anything out of the common? Mr. Fulljames' most interesting account of the Emerald Bird of Paradise suggests this idea to me.

It is a great pity that no one will comment on my notes (*b*). It is very unfair to any bird that its character should be left in the hands of one man.

Short notes may often contain a great deal of information, and yet not take much time to write.

F. G. DUTTON.

### THE TORTOISE AND THE TOAD.

SIR,—At page 136, Mr. Farrar tells us of the Macaw and the cat's meat; perhaps the following story may be allowed a corner in the *Avicultural*, although it is not about a bird. The heroine of the story is known to my sister, who told it to me but a few days ago.

A lady recently was going away from home. She had a favourite tortoise, and, being solicitous for its welfare during her absence, resolved on the following course for ensuring its safety. She carefully packed it up in a boot-box, securely fastened the box, and stowed it away on the top of a cabinet.

She was absent for from five to six weeks. On her return, without the faintest foreboding of evil, she took down the boot-box, unwrapped the creature, and, lo, 'twas—DEAD. Greatly aggrieved, and with the feeling that somehow she had been deeply wronged, the lady poured forth her woes into the rather unsympathetic ears of my sister. The latter reminded her how that previously she had always fed the tortoise regularly, on bread and milk, lettuce, etc., to the full, and how could she have supposed that it would have lived for over five weeks without food, water, or air!

The lady evidently regarded my sister's remarks as absurd, and gave the following crushing reply. She had read in books, in good books too, how that toads had been found at the bottom of coal pits hundreds of yards deep entombed in blocks of coal, where they had been living for—oh! for *ever* so many years without food, water, or air, and when released had hopped about joyful and active, so *of course* the tortoise ought to have lived a paltry six weeks in the boot-box *perfectly well*.

REGINALD PHILLIPPS.

(*b*) We heartily wish that those members who have experience with Amazon Parrots would adopt Mr. Dutton's suggestion.—ED.



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## MY AVIARIES.

By O. E. CRESSWELL.

My apology for the early reappearance of my signature in our Magazine is that I learn from the Secretary that "copy" has of late been short. It is some time, I think, since any member of the Society has described his or her aviary. I was asked in our earlier days to write some account of my own, but hesitated to do so: firstly, because my birds' abodes, of one kind and another, are so many that a description of them all would be wearisome, and, secondly, because I was afraid of seeming to imply that my own arrangements were a model for others, instead of being very sensible, as I am, of their many shortcomings. I have learnt, however, that aviculturists at least derive pleasure from seeing and reading of the aviaries of others, and I expressly preface this paper with the statement that I do not put these notes together as an example of what is best; but simply as an account of what are my own arrangements.

My aviaries are in position unlike others that I know: they are very scattered. This arrangement has its advantages and its disadvantages. *Pro*—It is pleasant, when walking about the grounds, here and there to come upon some fresh nook with its aviary. It is an advantage, too, to have them in widely different situations, almost in different climates, so that birds can have complete changes; *e.g.*, through the summer they can reside in a cool umbrageous retreat, in winter on a sheltered bank which catches every possible ray of sunshine. *Contra*—It is, of course, much more expensive to erect a number of isolated aviaries, than to erect the same number of the same size in a row under one roof. There is, too, great increase of labour in attending to aviaries thus located; and this is added to, in my case, by the fact that some of them must stand 150 feet, or even 200 feet, higher than others. Again, aviaries so placed must be somewhat open, not exactly to the ravages of vermin, but to

scares from them. I will presently relate some precautions adopted against these catastrophies.

Roughly speaking, my abodes of birds are of three kinds :  
 1.—Rooms in which they live in cages. 2.—Isolated aviaries in which they live about the grounds. 3.—A large wired enclosure intended, as the trees and hedges in it mature, to be a natural “paradise.”

1. Many Parrots and Parrakeets, and a few small birds, oscillate (of course, weather permitting) in their cages between garden terraces and a glazed verandah by day, and rooms by night. Some of these are ordinary dwelling rooms, others a comfortable suite of abodes over the stable—though cold in winter. There is nothing worth relating of them. A little account, however, of my birds’ cottage may possibly be of interest. In a lofty part of the grounds, which, to say the least, are not on a level, stands a little stone ivy-clad building with sham battlements. It was probably built late in the last century as “a folly”; then it descended to be an indifferent dwelling-house, and then was approaching the stage of ruin, when I restored it, opened out a blocked-up window or two, and turned it to its present use. Why such a building should ever have been termed “a folly” I can’t comprehend. I look upon the individual who built it as a very wise man ; for, firstly, he chose a position with exceptionally beautiful views of six counties—four English and two Welsh—and a fine panorama of a district of the winding Wye ; and secondly, he designed an upper room singularly well suited for my birds’ comfort.

There are two rooms, both of which have chimneys and had fire-places. As the building is on the hill-side, the lower room is partially underground on the North side, and on the South is approached by a flight of steps. The upper room is reached by a few stone steps from the outside on the North. It has two good South windows, and one West one. It is the winter quarters of many foreign Doves, a few Parrakeets, and a tribe of smaller birds. Some of their cages are ranged on a long table, the length of the room ; others are on stands and tables which run on castors, and enable the birds to be moved into the fullest sunshine. A coppice-clad hill rises still farther to the North and East, and gives protection to the building from cold winds. In lieu of the fire-place there is now a stove, which burns coke. On all evenings, from mid-October to April, which promise to be at all cold, a fire is lit about 5 p.m., and, if properly managed, keeps the room comfortable until 8 a.m. When there is severe frost, it is again made up at 10 p.m. In almost all weathers one window is thrown

open, according to the wind, for part of the day, and in warm weather, one or two are left open all day and night. During the seven years that the room has been put to this use, I have never had any kind of epidemic. Many birds are taken in temporarily as invalids from outdoor quarters, and almost invariably recover, and I cannot remember any instance of a bird having been seriously chilled in it. In such severe weather as February, 1895, the thermometer almost touched freezing point on several nights, but not for long; though in an outdoor aviary, not fifty yards off, it twice stood at 3° above Zero. The Waxbills continued blithe and healthy, and a Cordon Bleu is now in blooming health, which has been continuously in the room since May, 1892, save for about five months last year, when he was out of doors. I attribute the success of this room to the many hours through which, in fine weather, the sun pours into it, and to the purity of the hill air which blows into it.

2. I have many aviaries of wood and wire. They are, as I have said, scattered about, nearly all within the higher and carefully enclosed pleasure grounds of about nine acres, but even so it is impossible entirely to guard against occasional scares from vermin. Most of them have second lines of defence. I have many large enclosures—some for adult Poultry, others for coops and the rearing of chickens and foreign Pheasants. The fences are six and seven feet high, and wire netting of small mesh is carried a foot into the ground. Most of the aviaries are placed within these enclosures, which are a great additional protection to the inmates. It is no easy matter to select places for aviaries, having regard both to appearances and the comfort of the birds. I never put one up in a hurry, but try possible positions in all kinds of weather—searching March winds, Autumn fogs, and bright frosty mornings. The result is that, if one wants to find a pleasant nook on a not-altogether-pleasant day, it is almost invariably to be found on the South or West side of an aviary. In this climate, I need hardly say that the majority of them are designed to catch every ray of sun: only two are under the pleasant shade of apple and walnut trees through the middle of the longer days.

My aviaries are nearly all on the same plan, with many variations in minor details. Their usual width is 6 feet, their height 6 or 7 feet at the side to 8 or 9 feet in the centre of the span; and their length from 14 to 24 feet. Their narrowness may surprise some aviculturists; it is not of choice, but almost of necessity, for nearly all are on sloping ground, and every foot of width adds to the amount of brickwork, sometimes a veritable

wall, necessary to support the lower side. As far as possible, they run North and South ; at the North end is the inner house, of course all thickly match-boarded, and the boarding of the roof is covered with corrugated iron.

I find it convenient, for the catching of small birds, to have a door covered with fine wire netting between the house and the outer flight, though, as a rule, such doors are fastened open. The outer flights differ greatly in detail ; they and the inner houses are all span-roofed, with ornamental iron-work running along the ridge. The flight of one aviary is entirely boarded over, and the whole length of its Eastern side is boarded too. Most of them are half roofed with boarding and zinc, and half with fine wire netting. The roof of one is partially glazed instead of being boarded ; this seems to suit the Waxbills and small Finches as a residence for Summer, and even till late Autumn. It is an additional protection against wind if the sides of the flight, or even the most exposed side, are boarded for a few feet next to the inner house. The floors of the outer flights, when entirely roofed over, are covered with river-sand and fine gravel nearly a foot deep ; those partially roofed over are gravelled in the same way under cover, and the open part is covered with rich earth to the same level as the gravel. Here I plant shrubs, by preference climbers trained up the netting, elder, box, wild plum, and especially China rose and French honeysuckle (the latter grows most rapidly and is deliciously fragrant all the Summer), in them I tie little baskets, nearly flat-bottomed, in which Doves of all kinds delight to nest. For small birds I tie cocoanuts to nails and perches, generally under cover, and put small box-cages on shelves in the house, of course with the doors fastened open. Many perches, mostly of natural boughs and twigs, are placed all about both in the inner houses and the outer flights.

I may here give two hints. Firstly, that the makers of such aviaries often send iron cross-rods to add to their stability : it is well to insist upon wood being used for this purpose ; iron is dangerous to feet alike in great cold and great heat. Secondly, it is best to have wire netting, both of strong gauge (not *less* than 19) and small mesh ; there is no great difference between the prices of 1in. and  $\frac{1}{2}$ in. mesh—the latter will confine the smallest birds, and can scarcely be bent.

As I have said, the woodwork of my aviaries is all raised upon brickwork ; they are not safe without it, and where rodent vermin abound (which, fortunately, is not the case with me) fine strong wire netting should be laid over the entire area under



ground. The floors of most of my inner houses are of wood, somewhat raised above the level of the ground outside; those for small birds are thickly covered with river sand, for large ones with pine sawdust.

3. My large enclosure—"The Paradise" we call it—has only lately been finished, and is, of course, very bare of foliage; but yet much less so than might be expected, for when shrubs are moved from one's own grounds (as many of mine were) they bear transplanting better than when procured from nurserymen. I often longed to see the agile flight of my foreign Doves in a larger space than my aviaries afforded; now and then one escaped—once many—and how happy did they look flitting from tree to tree! Every season, too, nest after nest was lost from the intrusion and persecution of pairs who set their affections on the same abode. My first idea was to enclose a bit of a wood, with thick shrubs ready grown and trees enveloped in masses of ivy—perfect fastnesses for nesting. Mature consideration showed that the plan was impracticable. For a great portion of the year such an enclosure would be dank and miserable, and the fall of a tree might do untold damage. I therefore fell back upon a less ambitious plan; but one which already gives much pleasure to myself, and, apparently, to the birds (which have been but a fortnight in it), and promises, in the end, to be both successful and ornamental. I was making a number of large pheasantries for foreign Pheasants in a lofty paddock. This paddock slopes rapidly from East to West, on both of which sides it is protected by thick woods; on the North it is also protected, by a fine row of old beeches; on the South it is entirely open. Between two large pheasantries I got in such an ordinary aviary as I have described, running North and South. At right angles to it, so that instead of opening into space the door of the flight should open out into this larger enclosure, is "The Paradise." It is 64 feet long sloping rapidly length-wise, and 24 feet wide. The height of the sides is 7 feet, that of the central span between 13 and 14 feet. It is entirely covered with 1 inch mesh strong netting, which is carried a foot into the ground, and on the North side is partially boarded. There was some contrivance to make its span at once perfectly strong and light to look at. The central ridge is supported by young felled oaks, up which, already, ivy and Virginian creeper are growing. Half-way between the side-posts and the central ridge it was necessary to have strong uprights: these are yews and spruce-firs cut down in my own grounds, with many small side boughs left for perches; creepers have been planted to grow up them. Along the whole length of the North

side, save where it is broken by the aviary at right angles in the centre, a *Thuja* hedge is planted in the pheasantries next to it, which, in time, will be a great protection. Along the whole South side, and here within the wire, is planted a privet hedge (*Ligustrum ovalifolium*) which turns the corners at both ends. Various other bowers-to-be are planted, and some quite big shrubs are doing well. Towards the two ends, East and West, are limes destined to be cut into arcades as one sees them on the shores of Swiss and Italian Lakes.

Creepers have not been forgotten. Travellers in Japan record that we hardly know what wistarias are till we have sat under them in Japanese tea gardens. Wistarias are planted to grow up the side posts and, it is hoped, one day to meet over head. But I am making too long a story of what, after all, is only a modest aviary containing about 16,000 cubic feet.

Within eight days of the Doves having been turned into it, there were several nests, some of them made by birds which, poor things! have never before been able to nest. There is, too, very little squabbling, simply because those who don't like each other can keep apart. There are a couple of coops with small Pheasants within it, which neither interfere nor are interfered with.

I should add that, on all sides, there is a second line of defence, *i.e.*, other enclosures, which add to the safety of "The Paradise." It is conspicuous from the windows of the old "folly"—of the last century; probably late in the twentieth century, if some of its trees survive, it too will be called "the folly" of a strange aviculturist of the nineteenth century.

## THE GOLDEN-SHOULDERED PARRAKEET.

(*Psephotus chrysopterygius*).

By REGINALD PHILLIPPS.

Those of our members who are interested in Parrakeets may remember that, in July, 1898, (*see vol. iv., p. 155*) I mentioned having shut up a female of this species with a young male Redrump.

Later in the year, having disposed of those Parrakeets which would have persecuted these birds, I loosed them in the birdroom with garden attachment.

I had failed to obtain a male Golden-shoulder; but the female and the Redrump became inseparable friends.

In the spring of this year I noticed, day after day, feathers

of the Golden-shoulder lying about, and supposed that she had commenced to moult; and she was looking very ragged and untidy. On two occasions, however, I picked up a very substantial "mouthful" of her blue lower-back feathers, and not till then did it dawn upon me that the feathers I had noticed lying about had probably been pulled out by the Redrump in his endeavours to stop her and bring her to reason. The two birds, moreover, were very active prospecting all over the place, and more than once seemed inclined to settle down in some nesting spot, but were invariably ousted by an old Musky Lorikeet, who, "paired" with a Golden-fronted Parrakeet (*Brotogerys tuipara*), was determined upon nesting, and in turns took possession of every box and log that I was able to supply, ruthlessly destroying every nest that came into his way; and so it came about that I ceased to concern myself with the doings of the Golden-shoulder.

On May 14th, I suddenly became aware that the Golden-shoulder must be sitting, and found she had a nest in the bird-room, close by the door; and, feeling in the log, I found it contained four eggs. As there were other birds in the bird-room I was obliged to go in occasionally; but she sat so timidly that she invariably dashed out of the room the instant I touched the handle of the door. Otherwise she sat well, never coming off the nest but for the shortest possible time. While sitting, I think she was never fed on the nest by the male Redrump. The Redrump, nevertheless, could not have been more watchful and attentive. By word of mouth, he let her know everything that was going on in the outside world. They had a by no means meagre vocabulary, and, although of different species, understood one another perfectly. Should anyone appear, instantly a few very high-pitched piercing notes were sounded in rapid succession, almost as high pitched as the squeak of the bat which is inaudible to some ears. When that note had been uttered, the Golden-shoulder would lie like a log. Indeed, except when disturbed, I doubt if she ever left the nest until he came for her, and called her off with a few shrill whistles followed by pretty warbling notes, which she usually obeyed at once. He would then instantly feed her; and she would quickly rush off for a nibble at the green grass or something, and dart away back to her nest accompanied by her warbling mate.

On not less than two occasions, the Musky Lorikeet invaded the nest. The Redrump made no offer of assistance; but the Golden-shoulder, from the interior of her log, growled

so fiercely and ominously that the Lorikeet thought better of it and withdrew.

But their hopes and mine were doomed to disappointment, for the four eggs were clear.

Whether this was the fault of the individual Redrump, an aviary-bred specimen I am told, which never seemed to have half the life and energy of my former Redrumps and has not grown a full-length tail to this day, or whether the sterility was owing to the birds being of different species, I am not able to say. It does seem a pity that a male Golden-shoulder should be unobtainable.

The eggs are small, of a stout oval in shape, of precisely the same length as those of the Peach-faced Lovebird but thicker.

A few preliminary attempts at a second nest were made, but without results; and both birds soon afterwards fell into moult.

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## NESTING OF THE SCOPS OWL.

(*Scops giu.*)

By E. G. B. MEADE-WALDO.

Two pairs of this delightful and grotesque little Owl have nested and successfully hatched and reared all their young ones in our aviaries this summer. The Owl family have always held the first place in our affections amongst the birds kept here, both as aviary inmates, and as wild inhabitants of our woods and farms. The Scops Owl, a very occasional straggler to these islands, is a regular summer visitor to Southern Europe, and is almost or entirely an insect eater.

I have always found them very difficult to start in confinement, as they require a most astonishing supply of insects and other tender food. However, they seem to get hardier after a time, and, provided they have sufficient suitable food, have thriven. They become delightfully tame. For the last two years we have had a pair flying loose in a conservatory attached to the house, who, when a door was opened, used to come into the hall, perching on the pictures and the tops of the doors; and who would come down to be fed, and allow themselves to be picked up, without showing the slightest fear. The sight of a stranger will, however, transform them at once into what appears to be a broken-off piece of decayed wood with rough bark on it. This is done by quickly but almost imperceptibly



drawing all their feathers tight to the body, standing very upright, drawing the shoulder of the wing next to the supposed enemy half across the breast, elevating the ear tufts, and almost shutting the eyes. The protection of this manœuvre is most complete. It is done by all the Owls, but in the Scops family it appears to arrive at its most perfect development.

The first pair of Scops that nested with us this summer chose a good sized and solidly-made box with a lid in which a certain amount of decayed wood was placed; they had a roomy aviary to themselves. The cock commenced to call almost continuously from the middle of April, and the first egg was laid the 12th of May. The hen commenced to sit on May 17th, when she had completed her clutch of three eggs: differing from the generality of Owls, who usually commence incubation with the laying of the first egg. The young were hatched on June 10th, so incubation lasted twenty-four days, the shortest period of any Owl. They were covered with white down, grew most rapidly, and left the nest strong perchers on July 1st, and were apparently larger than their parents, but with short tails and wings, though able to fly several yards. They are now, July 10th, strong on the wing. The hen alone sat, and was carefully attended by the cock, who also did the whole work of providing food for the young until they left the nest, the hen staying with them and tearing it up. The food consisted of Cock-chaffers, May-flies, Alder and Caddis-flies, all of which were, fortunately, abundant at the right time, also Cockroaches and Mealworms, with young Sparrows and Mice; the amount of food this little family would consume was something astonishing, on one occasion when nearly ready to leave the nest they cleared up twenty-five Short-tailed field voles in one day—besides many insects.

The second pair went to nest ten days later, and have behaved precisely as the first pair, except that the cock has usually roosted with the hen in the nest. This pair have not got an aviary to themselves, but have for companions a Siberian Jay, a Spanish Azure-winged Pie, and a pair of Black-breasted Sandgrouse.

The white down in the nestling is replaced by a plumage almost precisely resembling that of the adults, so they differ from all the Owls, except the Barn Owls, in having no intermediate down on the body between the casting of white down and the assumption of the full plumage.

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## A YELLOW-FRONTED AMAZON

By A. G. BUTLER, Ph.D.

The Hon. and Rev. F. G. Dutton has expressed a wish to hear of the experience of other members of the Society touching Amazon Parrots.

About 1893 an aunt of mine, who was moving, asked me if I should like to have her old Amazon Parrot: the bird had been twenty years in her possession and had previously been the pet of two other owners, though for how long she could not ascertain. As I understood that it was a good talker I gladly accepted it, and it remained in my possession until its death in February, 1898: it is quite likely that this parrot was from forty to fifty years old when it died.

Mr. Abrahams, who saw our Amazon soon after it was given to us, unhesitatingly declared it to be a hen (I believe chiefly on account of the pale colour of its eyes) and dissection after its death proved conclusively that he was correct.

The bird was a Yellow-fronted Amazon; and, so far from being unable to talk, it had entirely forgotten its own language; so that when enraged (as it was off and on every day of its life) it shouted at the top of its voice exactly like a naughty boy: indeed on one occasion a visitor to our house imagined that a drunken man must have got into the kitchen, where the bird was kept.

Like most birds, and especially Amazons, Polly was intensely jealous and exceedingly treacherous: even our servant, who used to walk about with the bird on her shoulder and who could do almost what she pleased with it, got bitten once or twice. It liked me very well and soon learned to call me Arthur, but my wife was no favourite and my son it detested, which did not surprise me, since he always teased it for the fun of hearing it shout and sob.

As Mr. Dutton says of the Blue-fronted Amazon, our bird often had conversations with itself, the questions being almost all unintelligible and the answers invariably 'No!' spoken very decidedly. It undoubtedly knew when to say certain things and only said them at the proper time: for instance if it saw any of us dressed to go out it would say—'Are you going out?' 'Are you going in the Park?' and as you left the room it said 'Good-bye' or 'Good-night' always saying the first in the morning and the second in the evening.

Perhaps the greatest proof of the reasoning power of these birds was that when my servant went upstairs leaving Polly

alone, she soon got tired of her own company and began to call 'Addie' (she usually pronounced n like d) and when no notice was taken she tried to bring her down by an admirable imitation of the shout—'Ba-ker!'

It was very funny to see the knowing way in which our bird cocked its head on one side when asking a question—'Quite well?' 'Got a headache?' and, when she was answered, she always said—'Oh!' and sometimes—'Quite right.'

Some years before this Amazon was given to me, a child was staying with my aunt, whose nurse was an Ayah, named Nana: the child used to call out its nurse's name, and the parrot, not being able to say Nana learned to shout Lala at the top of its voice. As an evidence of how sounds having no meaning in themselves may be misinterpreted by those anxious to make sense of them, it is significant that at least two of our neighbours insisted that they had repeatedly heard our bird call out 'Mother!'—a word which it never spoke and perhaps had never heard.

## PERIOD OF MOULTING AND ASSUMPTION OF BREEDING PLUMAGE of the COMMON AVADAVAT.

(*Sporæginthus amandava*).

By W. T. PAGE, F.Z.S.

The birds (1 cock and 2 hens) are kept all the year round in a garden aviary, the front of which is always open to the weather.

1896. Moult commenced December 4th, completed Jan. 3rd, 1897. In full color, June 6th, 1897.

1897. Moult commenced December 10th, completed December 30th. In full color, June 30th, 1898.

1898. Moult commenced December 5th, completed January 14th, 1899. In full color, June 20th, 1899.

The above data refer only to one and the same bird—as aforementioned I have only one cock; when out of color he resembles the hens, with the exception that the red rump is more intense and there are several small black fan-shaped spots on his breast.

The assumption of breeding plumage is brought about by a growth of color in the feathers, though one or two of the larger flights are moulted at this time—I cannot say how many as I did not catch him—it would have disturbed his nesting companions too much.

The hens moulted concurrently with the cock, the moult in their case being a little more protracted.

The hens sing, though their song is neither so sustained nor so varied as that of the males.

It would be interesting if those who keep the Avadavat *indoors* would publish their data—as these birds in a state of nature moult somewhere about February or March, whereas mine have moulted regularly in December, it would appear as if this variation had been brought about by climatic conditions; though one would have looked for the opposite: *i.e.*, Summer or early Autumn for the moult instead of December.

I attribute my success in moulting them out of doors in the Winter, to their so readily eating the soft food and *mealworms*. I use Abraham's, Arthur's and Maschke's soft food alternately, with a liberal addition of ants cocoons.

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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### BIRDS OF KUMASI, WEST AFRICA.

SIR,—I send you a few notes in the hope they may be of interest.

When I was in Kumasi in May, of last year, I made the acquaintance of an old chief, who ruled an outlying district, and by dint of much explanation, I got him to understand that I was interested in birds, and he promised to send me some. He first sent me a very large Hornbill, which was a great pet for some weeks till a young Blotched Genet, that used to run about my hut, one day made an end of him. He had an extraordinary trick of swallowing a large bead I had on my table, and then when I held out my hand he would return it in such a solemn fashion that all my visitors used to be vastly amused. That he really swallowed it I know, for I could feel it in his crop.

Shortly after, a party came in from my friend the chief, bringing a couple of Touracos: they were the Thick-billed Touraco and were exactly the same as the Senegal Touraco in colouring, but were a trifle larger, and had yellow beaks instead of red. Well, one died but the other did well and is still alive: he survived a journey in a cold room up the channel in February of this year, so must be pretty tough. I gave him to Mr. Housden and hope he will like him. This bird is commonly called the 'Clock bird' on the Coast, from his habit of going off like an alarm clock at dawn; mine always did it when I was at Cape Coast Castle, and always preceded his gruff note of 'hough-hough-hough' *ad lib.* with a shrill 'kik.' The power of swallowing is enormous for the size of the bird, half of a large banana slips down his gullet with the greatest ease. Mine was a most cleanly bird, and so tame that he always tried to get into my tub in the morning as soon as I poured it out, even if I was in it myself: I might add he was nearly always loose.

In the wild state they are very shy birds indeed, and although when on column I have heard their cry sometimes twenty or thirty times in the



morning, I only twice saw the bird, but then a green bird in a thick green tree is never a conspicuous object.

Nearly all the huge cotton trees in the Sacrifice Grove at Kumasi were destroyed by our troops in the 1895 Expedition, but one monster was left among other smaller ones. In a hole about 40 feet up a pair of Grey Parrots were nesting in February, 1898. I went up by means of a bamboo-ladder, and found three white eggs about the size of a Woodpigeon's. In about a month the young ones were old enough to come to the mouth of the hole and look out, when I took them. One died, but two I still have: they are very tame, sham death, and do lots of ridiculous tricks and also are beginning to talk fairly well. I found the Sierra Leone Grey Parrot to be a much darker and uglier bird than the Gold Coast kind, perhaps it is *P. timneh*, please inform me Mr. Editor.

I will send you a few further notes, if they will be of any interest, on the birds of Sierra Leone.

BOYD HORSEBRUGH,

*Lieut. Army Service Corps.*

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#### PYTELIA MELBA AND PYTELIA AFRA.

SIR,—I should be glad if some expert of the Avicultural Society would explain the differences between *Pytelia melba* and *Pytelia afra*. There seems to be some confusion between the two species, both of which are described as the Red-faced Finch.

At the end of March last year I received a splendid pair of Red-faced Finches, and a week later a second pair from the same source. This second pair I took to be an immature pair of the same species as the first pair. The horizontal white lines on the breast were not nearly so pronounced, and the red on the face of the male was only represented by a few small spots. But as no change took place in these birds after several months' possession, beyond perhaps a few more red spots on the male's face, I began to regard them as something distinct from the first pair. One very marked difference exists in the colour of the feathers under the tail. In the first pair these are quite white, but in the second pair the white is crossed by dark bars. On referring to the illustration of *Pytelia afra* in Dr. Butler's work on 'Foreign Finches,' I find these dark bars are represented. I have therefore formed the opinion that the second pair are *Pytelia afra*, and the first pair *Pytelia melba*.

The two *Pytelia melba* and the hen *Pytelia afra* were exhibited at the Crystal Palace, in October, 1898. The report in the *Avicultural Magazine* referred to all three birds as *Pytelia afra*. Another periodical called the cock *Melba* a Wiener's Waxbill. Acting on this information I entered the cock *Melba* at the Alexandra Palace in November, 1898, as a Wiener's Waxbill. The same paper then stated that it was incorrectly entered. At the Crystal Palace Show in February, 1899, the cock *Pytelia melba* was exhibited alone, and the pair of *Pytelia afra* together. In this case the report in the *Avicultural Magazine* expressed a doubt as to whether the two exhibits were really two species as entered. In the *Feathered World*, of June 23rd, both pairs are spoken of as *Pytelia melba*.

The hen *Melba* died at the Royal Aquarium Show in November, 1898, and the cock *Afra* came home dead from the Crystal Palace Show in February, 1899, but both birds are preserved and mounted for future reference. The cock *Melba* and the hen *Afra* are still alive and in the best

of health and feather. It has been said that it was a pity that a hen was not shown with the cock *Melba* at the Crystal Palace Show in October, instead of separately. It would have been a far greater pity if it had been, or except in the case of the *Shâma* I have never known a hen to be so ill-treated by its mate. When first received they were the best of friends, and so remained for nearly two months, when one morning the hen was found with several feathers missing, and the head bleeding, in a corner of the cage. Each bird was then kept in a separate cage, and about every two weeks an attempt was made to put them together, but the persecution always recommenced immediately. This state of things continued till the death of the hen in November.

The pair of *Pytelia afra* on the contrary always remained together in perfect friendship, and three white eggs were laid on the floor of the cage, with an interval of about a week between each. The first egg was placed in a nest suspended in the cage, but the other eggs were laid on the floor as before. The three eggs were kept in the nest for a long time, but the birds took no further notice of them. If they had returned in safety from the Crystal Palace they would have been allowed to try again in an aviary, but unfortunately only the hen returned alive.

All attempts to mate the hen *Afra* with the cock *Melba* have proved most unsuccessful.

L. W. HAWKINS.

#### BEARDED TITS.

SIR,—In the last number of the Magazine Mr. Phillipps writes of a pair of Bearded Tits in his aviary as “inveterate egg stealers.” It is much to be hoped that the pair he kept were exceptions to the rule in regard to behaviour. I have not kept these interesting birds till this season, but now have a pair in a small aviary, which is built over a ditch, and in which my Kingfisher “Johnnie” lived four years; though it is an ideal place for Bearded Tits they have made no attempt at nesting, but in the same place are a pair of Goldfinches, which have successfully nested, also a cock Serin Finch mated with a hen Lesser Redpoll—these have also nested—and though I have seen the Bearded Tits daily within a few inches of each nest no egg has been disturbed. The hen Redpoll laid five eggs, but only two were fertile: one young one died, the other is a fine bird now flying about, and the hen Redpoll is again sitting on five eggs. I am not sure if this cross has been previously recorded, but I fancy they should be pretty little hybrids.

It seems a pity the American Goldfinch or Siskin (*C. tristis*) should be so difficult to keep. I have had several but they all seem to go off in a few months; many dozens were imported in London this spring and I should imagine not a tenth part are now alive. If we could only get some bred here they might be hardier.

I am afraid the very changeable weather we have had this summer will have made it a bad season for the breeding of British birds in aviaries.

G. C. SWAILES.

#### THE NESTING OF THE NONPAREIL.

SIR,—I am sending the Magazine another account of nesting, which, I think, will be interesting to all our readers, namely that of the American Nonpareil.

The bird itself, at least the male, is well-known to all, as the bird

dealers always have a large stock about June; the females are very rare and probably few of our Members have ever seen a genuine live one.

I was fortunate enough to secure three hens last autumn, and I was able to winter them all right; and this spring I turned them out in two of my big outdoor aviaries, one pair in each. The reason for this is that Nonpareil cocks are so abominably combative that if two were put together one would soon have to yield up the ghost. As it was, for some days, the two cocks spent most of the day trying to get at each other through the dividing wires of their aviaries.

I saw once that someone asked if Nonpareils changed colour. They do, most undoubtedly; in winter the cock is quite a sober looking gentleman, and only gets his splendid livery as summer draws on. Another thing—they take about three years before they come into full colour. (*b*)

The hen Nonpareil is a very sober little lady; a sort of olive green on top and very pale buff below.

She has not the slightest suspicion of *blue* about her, and if she has (though it sounds a bit Irish) she is an undoubted young cock. Nearly all the so-called hens are young cocks. I once looked carefully through about sixty *so called hens* one by one, and out of the whole lot, only two were genuine hens.

I suspect that very few people keep Nonpareils for any length of time, as they are, like our own Chaffinch, more than half insectivorous, and a seed diet soon leads to wasting away or consumption.

The cock has a pretty little song and he is very fond of sitting on the top of a bush and giving out his performance. I often hear mine singing quite late at night when it is almost dark.

My birds built their nest in a box tree, quite low down, and it was a very pretty affair, made externally of fine hay and grass and lined inside with fine roots and horsehair. The hen laid three eggs and sat splendidly, she did not seem to mind my looking at her one bit. The eggs are sea green in colour and heavily blotched with sienna brown on the big end. They are in fact somewhat like a small Dhyal's egg. Two young were hatched and one egg was clear and I have it now. At first the young were covered with very dark fluff, like young Bullfinches.

So far as I could see the hen did most of the feeding, at any rate the cock did not let me see him stoop to domestic duties, though I dare say he did some. Whenever I went in to feed he perched himself on a high twig, as if to say: "Now what are you up to?" The hen soon got to know that my visits meant food for the babies, and she was always ready for me after a few days. When the young are being fed their call-note is something like *si, si, si*.

The excreta are carried out to a distance and dropped.

The young grew grandly and at the end of about thirteen days left the nest, July 7th. They are funny little grey birds with black beaks and stumpy little tails.

I saw them yesterday, July 22nd, and the tails were more presentable, and they fly very decently, and very proud do the parents seem of them.

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(*b*). I have had a good many of these birds, but my males never put on a different plumage for the winter; moreover, the numbers exhibited at our Shows are always recognizable as typical, whether exhibited in winter or summer. I have had two hens, one of which is still living. I purchased her some four or five years ago in nestling plumage.—A. G. B.

The young were reared *entirely on insect food*; and only those who have tried, know what that means.

I believe that this is the first time that Nonpareils have ever been bred and reared in England and therefore my pair are justly proud of their effort.

C. D. FARRAR.

#### THE AMERICAN MOCKING BIRD.

SIR,—I should like to ask you or any member of the Avicultural Society whether the above bird, *Turdus polyglottus* (Wilson), is the wonderful mimic he is made out to be in books.

I have had one for twelve months, and he is in good health and song (he is singing now) and his song much resembles the chirping of a good-sized chicken. As for his mimicry, I don't detect him mimicking either human being, animal, or bird, although dogs, cats, ten different kinds of birds, children, etc., abound. Now I have heard this power of mimicry questioned by others, though, in a book I have just read, a writer states that he has heard the bird mimic 24 different sounds of beasts and birds.

I should, therefore, be very glad if any English aviculturists will state what their experience is of the bird's vocal abilities. (a)

A. JONES.

#### THE AGE OF CAGE-BIRDS.

SIR,—In the March number, Mr. Meade-Waldo has an article on the ages to which birds live in confinement, and he hoped the members would be induced to record any that seemed to be sufficiently important. I have kept account of dates of purchase of the smallest Finches and Waxbills, and when death ensued, and in the majority of cases about eight years seems to be the length of duration of their lives in confinement when kept in cages.

Here are a few cases. On the 11th June, 1889, I bought three birds—a hen Green Avadavat and a pair of African Grey Waxbills. The former lived to 27th March, 1897—within three months of eight years. The pair of Waxbills died in the same year: the cock on the 31st May, and the hen on the 20th July—one just under, the other a little over, the above-mentioned time. On the 8th November, 1889, a pair of Orange-cheek Waxbills arrived; the cock lived until the 17th January, and the hen until the 20th February, 1898. These dates were a little over the usual period.

I can 'go one better' than our Secretary with regard to his pair of Golden-breasted Waxbills, that he has had about seven years (*vide* April number, page 112). A pair was sent me on the 12th of June, 1890; the cock getting through the  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch bars of the cage, was killed the same year by a cat; but the hen is still in good health. As Mr. Goddard wrote that they had moulted with him the previous autumn, she must have been in this country for ten years.

The above are *cage* records with regard to duration of life in confinement. Do any of our members keep their wee birds longer in outdoor or indoor aviaries? If so, will some of them kindly give the *average* age of their feathered friends.

W. T. CATLEUGH.

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(a). I gave a detailed account of my American Mocking-bird in the *Feathered World* for April 5th, 1895, and I have again described it much more fully in my Articles on Foreign Bird-keeping (F. W. 1898, chapter IV). This bird is a superb singer and mimic: possibly Mr. Jones may possess a hen.—A. G. B.







PRINCESS OF WALES' PARRAKEET  
(*Polytelis alexandriae*).

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## THE PRINCESS OF WALES'S PARRAKEET.

By HENRY J. FULLJAMES.

In writing of the Princess of Wales's Parrakeet (*Polytelis alexandræ*) only superlative adjectives can be used. Of all the Parrakeets it is the rarest, the most elegant in shape, the most beautiful and at the same time the most delicate in colouring, the tamest, the most desirable as a pet, and the least objectionable in "song." I had almost written that it was absolutely without objection in regard to the screaming which is such a drawback to the keeping of Parrots; but when it likes, the Princess of Wales's Parrakeet has a very shrill whistle which is somewhat trying to the human ear. This, fortunately, is only resorted to occasionally, and then only when it is protesting against attentions being bestowed upon other inmates of the bird-room. There is one other superlative adjective which, unhappily, must be applied to the bird—it is most delicate in constitution. Possibly in the remote wilds of the extreme interior of Australia, whence the bird comes, it finds some food which cannot be imitated in captivity, or possibly the very few specimens of which I, or any one else for that matter, have had any knowledge, have been extra delicate representatives of the species.

Only one specimen has ever been acquired at the Zoo, and that was "deposited" in 1895 (*a*). On my last visit to the Gardens, the bird was alive, but was sadly "out of form." Of my own two specimens, the cock did not survive importation very long; and the hen has required considerable attention ever since I have had her. Many times her life has not seemed worth a day's purchase. For a long time she refused seed altogether, and was kept alive entirely on fruit and sponge-cake, with port wine and

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(*a*) I distinctly remember seeing two specimens of *Polytelis alexandræ* at the Zoo a few years ago: one was, I believe, the property of the Society, and the other was deposited. D. S.-S.

beaten egg in the place of water for drinking. She is now in a healthy moult, and is living on a mixture of millet and canary seed.

The extreme rarity of the bird seems to be due to the difficulty of getting it through the journey of a thousand and odd miles to the coast, across a country devoid of roads. With my two birds were brought down two others, a pair, and these were "deposited" in the Adelaide Zoo by the gentleman, an Australian explorer, who had brought them from the interior. Of this pair the cock bird, like my own, has since died, but fortunately not before a pair of young ones had been hatched, and I believe these are now doing well in the Gardens. If they are for sale upon the return visit to Australia of the friend who gives me the information, they will be bought for me, so I may yet have another pair.

In view of the admirable drawing by Mr. Smit, a reproduction of which appears in this number, it is quite unnecessary for me to describe the plumage of this beautiful bird, especially as, although even a painting must fail to do justice to the delicate gradations of colour to be found in the living specimen, a written description would, to a still greater extent, fall short of adequately expressing those wonderful combinations of rose-colour, grey, green, and blue.

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## THE BLACK LARK.

*Melanocorypha yeltoniensis.*

By REGINALD PHILLIPPS.

Except in the London Zoological Gardens, I have never seen or heard of this species being kept in confinement; and in my limited library, the only accounts of it that I can find are in the Royal Natural History and in the Catalogue of Birds, British Museum, Vol. XIII.; and I have kept only one pair. It must be borne in mind, therefore, that my observations have been based solely upon these two birds, living under unnatural conditions, and fed, while breeding, almost entirely upon mealworms.

On the 19th February, 1898, I obtained a pair of Black Larks. They were so weak from having been fed only on seed that for a time I despaired of saving the male. As soon as they were strong enough, they were placed in the garden, where they have been from that time to this,—during the winter with the free run of the whole aviary, but during the rest of the year shut off in the reserved portion, which is so crowded with trees and



shrubs as seriously to interfere with their flight and general welfare. Happily there are some sheds nearly four feet, and a structure above seven feet, high, on the roofs of which they pass a great deal of their time. And the female often used to sit on two thick perches fully eight feet from the ground, one on either side of the aviary, and would sometimes spend a good half-hour flying backwards and forwards from one to the other. Our Sky Lark, be it remembered, in some parts of the country freely perches on stone walls.

It was not to be expected that such exceptionally timid and nervous birds, and withal so weak, should nest the first summer. A certain amount of flirting went on : during some months the male was perpetually trotting about, warbling almost unceasingly, with his tail cocked up in the air. This spring, however, I considered they might nest; the reserved aviary had a number of little finches in it, but every bird was removed that was likely to interfere with them. Unfortunately, I was obliged to make one exception, for the Pied Rock-Thrushes, male and female, became so quarrelsome as they threw off their winter clothes and donned their nuptial robes (a little point in natural history which is ignored by theorists) that I had to locate the most forward pair in the Larks' aviary. They did not interfere much with the female; but almost every time the female Rock-Thrush came off her nest she went for the male Lark. In the open, the Lark would have made off, but in the aviary he hadn't a chance; for minutes at a time she would viciously pursue him; and the poor creature so knocked himself about against the roof of the aviary that my hopes of his breeding fell very low indeed. Happily she became more quiet or otherwise occupied when her young were hatched; and I cleared them out of the aviary a few hours before the young Larks were supposed to be due to appear.

Very early in the spring I had noticed that the female Lark had commenced to work out a hollow, at the extreme end of the aviary, under the stem of a Virginia creeper. I may here mention that, when at work, the female (for the lazy male, imitating his masters, was above work; but he was not above seeing his wife work) seemed never to use her feet; she invariably worked with her bill, moving it masterfully right and left; but when taking a dust bath she would scratch like a common fowl. On May 21st, the female commenced carrying mouthfuls of the shortest obtainable hay in the direction of the nest; on the 25th she was still busy, and still carried a little on the 26th. Early in the winter I had thickly covered the roof of the "structure" already referred to with hay, so that the Larks

might not sit on the zinc ; and, curiously enough, both this bird (for her first nest) and the Rock-Thrush used only this soiled hay for their respective nests. Watching from a window of the house, I was able to see her fly down with this hay, but nothing more. It transpired afterwards that six eggs were laid ; and she seems to have commenced sitting with the first ; and the first-born of the four was perhaps six days older than the youngest.

The female Lark sat very timidly, instantly leaving the nest (first running some yards, then flying) if the handle of the house-door, which opened into the adjoining aviary, were but touched. There was one curious difference between this species and the Rock-Thrush. The male Rock-Thrush, with a meal-worm in his bill, would sit like a lump for any length of time if he could detect the slightest sign of my presence at any of the windows, and it was weary work watching him ; but the Lark seldom, if ever, although so wary, detected me through the glass. On June 15th, creeping on all-fours beneath the thick foliage, I paid my first visit to the nest. It was not where I had supposed. The thickening foliage had driven the Lark away to the most open (overhead) spot she could find at the back of the garden. Observing the nest-hole under the wall to have been deserted, for a moment I was nonplused, when I suddenly found the young under my nose. I counted them carefully, only three heads were visible, and these three heads with their three corresponding bodies were thickly coated with exceptionally long down of a light yellow, or yellow-buff, colour. Now that I knew where to look for the nest, I found I could get a distant peep at it from the feeding-place ; and as the lump of yellow down swelled above the level of the ground, when attending to the food and water, I could daily form an idea as to how matters were progressing.

On June 22nd, the female commenced building another nest. On the first day she carried only lumps of earth :—If I ever had any doubts as to the power of a bird to carry its eggs or anything else, they were dispelled by the sight of the ease with which this bird carried really large lumps of earth to her nest. After depositing each lump in the nest-hole, which presumably had been excavated before I was up, she proceeded to work at it with her chest, moving her body right and left. Disgusted with the thick foliage, this second nest was built in the front of the aviary, and could be watched from the house.

To return to the young birds :—On June 23rd, the nest was chock full, the first-born sprawling as usual over the others ; but on the following day there remained but one half-fledged

creature, looking the picture of misery. Later in the day I saw two youngsters hopping (they could not *walk* until some days later) after their mother, and by accident they found the new nest and instantly flopped into it, and made it their head-quarters for some two hours, floundering about, and hopelessly marring their mother's schemes of concealment. Afterwards they hopped about all over the place, rushing to their mother for food; and later I observed a third. But the mother repaired and took to her nest; and on the evening of the 25th the three young looked neglected and very miserable. On the 26th, the piteous cry of one of the young birds, No. 3 in order of age, nearly broke my heart:—it had been entirely deserted. I made a search, and found the dead body of a No. 4, evidently the one I had seen alone in the nest. It was now lying about two feet from the nest, or perhaps a little more, and probably had been carried to the place where I had found it, and then had been deserted as too young to follow for food. No. 3 I took into the house, but did not succeed in rearing it. The sitting mother came off her nest from time to time to feed Nos. 1 and 2, who settled themselves down in the neighbourhood of the nest, and darted after her the instant she came off. Eventually No. 2 died a few hours after a thunderstorm, apparently from inflammation, and No. 1 alone survives.

The only peculiarity about the nests was their depth, and steep coffee-cup sides.

According to the Royal Natural History, "the female lays four eggs, bluish in colour and spotted with yellow." In the first nest, there were four young birds; and I found two eggs, one near the place to which the female carried the excreta, and the other in the same direction but not carried so far. I am reasonably satisfied that these eggs had been laid in the nest, and had been removed by the female. Only two eggs were laid in the second nest; but I picked up a third on the 13th July, in the spot whither the female often retreated when disturbed. At a very early stage of the second nest I had noticed the premature rejection of the male by the female, which was followed by the sudden desertion of the nest; this splendid bird had taken a chill, and, to my great sorrow, died during the night of July 12th-13th.

I cannot make my eggs agree with the description mentioned above. The ground is a pale gray-white; and they are blotched all over with pale or gray-brown. At the thick end, the "spots" run more into one another than over the rest of the

egg. Some of the eggs have darker and more decidedly brown spots than the others.

The female did all the work of nest-making, incubating, and feeding and attending upon the young. More than once the male savagely attacked the young birds; and I cannot place to his credit a single certain instance of his having fed them. During the whole of the spring and nesting-season, he had been my great delight; and I am grievously disappointed that he should have turned out to be such a selfish character. From early morn till late in the evening he used to sing and posture incessantly: it was one continuous, never-ending warble. The song was neither powerful nor beautiful, but it was very varied and highly pleasing. So long as the growth of grass and wheat was sufficiently short to allow him to keep to the ground, he was perpetually on the trot with a cocked-up tail. Should he chance to meet his mate, he instantly commenced to dance and caper. He had a true love dance; and with high arched neck would prance and skip right merrily. Before the eggs were hatched, however, he was driven off the ground, and thenceforth spent most of his time on the roof of a shed, slightly under four feet high and overlooking the second nest. Here he went on with his warbling, the tail jerking up and down with the stiffness of a wooden toy, and here also he would dance if joined by the female even for a moment. For a while I could not understand some of their courting postures, until I found that they copulated in the air. Perhaps this is not uncommon with Larks, but I do not know. It came as a surprise to me. When the female was not very amiable, he would charge at her again and again until he forced her into flight. When she became more affectionate, however, it was a pretty sight to watch them. Standing up at his full height, some two feet from her, with wings and tail spread out to their full extent, with quivering, shimmering wings he would slowly approach her. If very loveable, she would rise and meet him likewise with outspread wings. The male Black Lark evidently glories in his black, as the courting Golden-winged Woodpecker glories in his golden, underparts, for not only did he disport himself as described when actually with the female on the shed, but, from the nearest edge of the shed, he would stand over her, as it were, with outstretched quivering wings, while she was sitting on her second nest.

So long as the Rock-Thrushes were in the aviary, the male clearly understood that he had a duty to perform, and regularly patrolled in the front, charging furiously at every bird that came to the ground, including the male Rock-Thrush. When the



female Rock-Thrush came to the ground, he would crouch down, keeping his head always towards her, and would execute various strategical movements to the rear until he was able to manœuvre himself altogether out of her neighbourhood. From the moment that he realised that the Rock-Thrushes had really gone, he ceased to keep guard, feeling that there was no longer a foe worthy of his steel. Thenceforward, and up to the actual day on which the female died, he gave himself up to warbling and posturing; but, since, he has been mute, and keeps almost entirely on the ground along with his child, with whom he is now quite friendly.

As regards the plumage of these birds, the female may be briefly described as of a light sandy-buff much speckled with darker.

The male, in winter plumage, is nominally like the female; but my male has always shewn a much darker plumage, with apparently black primaries. His only moult is in the autumn. According to the Br. Museum Catalogue,—“In *winter plumage* the male is black, but the whole of the feathers are obscured by broad edgings of sandy colour. By the wearing off of these margins the full black plumage is attained.” This is doubtless substantially correct; but I am not quite satisfied that it accounts for all the changes I have noticed. The same authority says of the young, which one might suppose would have been like the female,—“Mottled like all young Larks, and especially resembling a Shore-Lark, but blackish on the head and back.” My young birds had no juvenile mottling; if they are to be described as mottled, so must the parents, especially the mother. Numbering them according to age, of No. 4 I can only say that it was blackish and without mottles; it was very juvenile, and the reverse of savory when picked up, and was promptly cremated. Of the three elder, as they trotted about, No. 1 was always lighter than the others, while the other two were exactly alike. Presumably they were a female and two males. Nos. 2 and 3, when in a squatting position, seemed to be wholly black above, with a conspicuous sandy superciliary streak. On close examination, however, it appeared that most of the feathers had a faint edging round the tips of sandy; whilst those round the neck, on the chest, and especially on the wings, were more or less edged with the same colour; but the lower breast, abdomen, and vent were of a dead sooty black without a trace of lighter. As No. 1 developed, the sandy tips seemed to grow and hide the black; but she remains distinctly darker than the old female. At one period, a bold line of sandy ran up from the bill to about the

centre of the crown; and this line, and the superciliary streaks, formed very conspicuous marks on the blackish ground.\* On July 15th, I found the young bird on one of the sheds for the first time, and, at a distance of about four feet, made the following notes :—The superciliary streaks, although still very conspicuous, seemed inclined to spread; the central streak had dispersed, and formed a cluster of sandy spots on the crown; a new sandy streak started on each side from the corner of the mouth, passed well below the eye, but curved upwards close behind it and almost joined the superciliary streak, giving the face a curious but not pretty expression; the back of the head, nape, and cheeks were spotless and of a deep brown colour, almost black. Something like a circle of sandy still appeared round the neck. Back brown, each feather being edged with sandy; shoulders similar, but strongly inclined to be spotty. Secondaries broadly edged with sandy; primaries as folded, almost entirely brown, but a little lighter along the edge of the wing. Chest white sandy, spotted with darker. Tail brown, laterally edged with light sandy. I never noticed the latter on the mother during her life, but found afterwards that the whole of the outer feather on each side was very light sandy, and also the edge of the outer web of the second feather. In the young bird, this light edging down the sides of the tail is often conspicuous as she runs about, but I do not notice it in the male. The tail was forked. Although still inclined to darker, the black has practically disappeared. Where has it gone to, and how came the young to be so *very* black? I have never studied colour feeding, but cannot refrain from suggesting that the unnatural feeding of these young birds may have caused an unusual flow of latent black pigment. The mealworms were stopped as soon as possible; and the blackness in the survivor has subsided or been absorbed. I am inclined to think that the male obtains some of his colouring from a flow of pigment in the spring. On the other hand, as a protective colouring for the young, the black must be valuable; for the three tots, as broad as they were long, when squatting about, looked remarkably like cattle droppings; and when one would raise his head in the long grass, the thick bunch of sandy down on the eyebrows, not far off an inch long, gave the black urchin such a venomous-reptile and generally uncanny appearance as would hinder many a foe from approaching too near.

As regards the survivor, she and her mother were devoted to one another; and, as she frisked and skipped around her in youthful glee, I felt inclined to frisk and skip myself, and to

shout with the celebrated but otherwise unknown poet :—Oh, what a LARK !!!

*Habitat.*—"Central Asia, ranging into Southern Russia. and sometimes even further westward."

*August 21st.*—The young bird has since been quietly assuming the plumage of the adult female.

## THE NESTING OF THE PENNANT,

By the Rev. C. D. FARRAR.

I am sometimes afraid that members of our Society will weary of my frequent signatures over articles sent in ; but I cannot help my birds doing so well ; so with this brief apology, I will begin again.

I may perhaps be permitted, before commencing my story, to refer my readers back to a paper I wrote last year on the "Sex of Pennants." I then pointed out that there is no possibility of mistaking a cock and hen Pennant.

The cock has a crimson head extending right over the cheeks and neck ; the hen has her head of an orangy-reddish tint. But leaving out, for fear of wearying my readers, many other points to which I then drew attention—the absolutely certain way of telling a hen is by her *tail*. In the hen Pennant the centre feathers are *green* ; in the cock they are rich violet.

I refer to this point because Mr. Fillmer saw fit to put in, what I considered under the circumstances, a most (shall we call it ?) impolite footnote to my article :—

"We do not hold ourselves responsible for any of the opinions or facts stated in this article. The same applies to all articles published in this Magazine ; but we wish it to be clearly understood in this case, as our personal feeling is that Mr. Farrar's conclusions require to be confirmed by the observation of other specimens, besides the pair he writes about, before they can be accepted.—ED."

I said nothing at the time (a), but, thinks I, we will bide our time, and "all things come to him that waits." These things have come to me. My Pennants have bred, and it is not the *same* hen I wrote about then, but a new one ; and she has, *mirabile dictu*, the same signs of sex as her predecessor ! So even Editors may live and learn.

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(a) This is scarcely correct—Mr. Farrar said a good deal, in correspondence with us.—ED.

I should like here to say that the Editor may in future rest quite easy that I do not say what I cannot prove. Not only is the old hen Pennant marked as I say, but in the nest of young ones, of which there are five, two have *green* tail centres and three have blue: hence there are three cocks and two hens. If anyone will in future look at a lot of Pennants, they will see that it is as I say, and that it is quite easy to distinguish the *Sex of Pennants*. So much for my own defence—for even the worm will turn if you tread hard enough.

I might say that if the British Museum Catalogue gives one description alone of the adult plumage, as Mr. Seth-Smith says, the sooner the authorities alter the description the better it will be for accuracy.

They began nesting operations sometime in May: the cock diligently feeding the hen being the first sign of good things to come. When pairing, the cock makes a terrible noise, something like the barking of a dog, and he also gives a pretty whistle from time to time. If the hen is not ready to mate, should her lord prove too demonstrative, she runs at him along the perch, head down, and pretends to bite his leg savagely; when he sheers off quickly.

One night, by the look of the hen, I knew eggs were not far off, and the next morning there was an egg laid on the floor, through inexperience. Thinks I, this will not do, my lady; so I popped the egg into her log and awaited issues. Next day she took the hint and laid her egg, like a well-regulated bird, beside the other in the nest. Altogether, five were deposited; but at first she did not sit very closely, and caused me thereby much mental anguish. However, she apparently knew her business better than I did, and what Pennants' eggs required by way of heat—for every egg hatched out in due course: about twenty days, as far as I could *guess*, for it is impossible to tell such things to a day, unless you are idiot enough to interfere, and I am not. The first I knew of the hatching out, was the noise the youngsters made. Day by day it grew, to my great joy, and at first resembled the barking in miniature of a pack of hounds, but gradually the voices changed to the whistle of the adults, and then to a hoarse grumbling noise.

Both parents worked early and late; and well they might, to feed those five hungry mouths, and to their credit they have reared every one. One curious thing I noticed, that, when the old cock was going to feed, when the youngsters were small, he used to put his beak down on the perch and bring up the food



repeatedly into his mouth, perhaps for five minutes at a time; and then off he would fly to the nest, as much as to say, "I think the feeding bottle will do now."

The hen brooded her young *closely* for about four days; afterwards she only stayed in the nest at night. Too hot I expect!

The young ones are all out, but are being fed by the parents. They have *yellow* beaks; the hens only a carmine *crown* on the top of their heads, followed by sage green; backs sage green with dull black centres; tails of hens tipped with *white* and *green centres*; cocks' tails *blue* where the hens' are green. The young hens have much more green on the necks and sides than the young cocks. Size, when they first came out, about that of a big Rosella. They are now, August 21st, nearly as big as their parents.

I have looked carefully through all books I know of, and, so far as I can see, this is the first authentic account of rearing Pennants. I pay no attention to vague general statements.

I might say that my Pennants dote on mealworms, and eat them like shrimps, held in one claw. It may be nice for the Pennant, but I should think decidedly nasty for the mealworm.

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We have printed the above article exactly as received from the writer—and are quite content to leave the point at issue to the good sense of our readers. It is possible that Mr. Farrar has discovered a sexual distinction which escaped the notice of Gould, Salvadori, and other ornithologists, and which the many aviculturists who have kept Pennants for years have also failed to observe—but we do not consider that he has at present proved this. We shall keep an open mind on the point until Mr. Farrar's conclusions are confirmed or disproved by other observers. If such a very marked difference in colouring in the sexes actually exists *in all examples*, it is passing strange that it has not been noticed before, and that the series of skins at the British Museum fails to shew it. We should be glad if members who keep Pennants, of which they know the sex, would carefully examine their plumage in the light of Mr. Farrar's remarks and communicate the result to us for publication.—ED.

Everyone who has had any experience of the Pennant Parrakeet (either living in its native haunts, in captivity in Europe, or dead in Museums) has unhesitatingly described the sexes as alike; but Mr. Farrar, having apparently secured one or two females of the closely allied species *Platyercus adelaida*, and paired them successfully with *P. pennanti*, has felt it his duty to set everybody right. The Adelaide Broadtail is so closely related to Pennant's Broadtail, that it would be quite remarkable if they refused to interbreed. When races interbreed, examples resembling each parent are quite likely to be reproduced by them. The young of typical Pennants are described as being entirely green. Breeding Pennants has been repeatedly done in Germany, but rearing the young has only been occasionally successful: nevertheless this has occurred.—A.G.B.

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## REVIEW.

"*Foreign Bird Keeping*," by Arthur G. Butler, Ph.D., F.L.S., F.Z.S., etc. Part I. ("Feathered World" Office).

This is a reprint of a series of articles which have recently appeared in the *Feathered World*.

Readers of the *Avicultural Magazine* do not require any introduction to Dr. Butler as an author, and in this unpretentious book they will once more appreciate the accuracy and thoroughness by which his writings are always distinguished.

After a chapter on "Aviaries and Management," Dr. Butler gives an account, first of some of the more frequently imported soft-food species, and afterwards of the finches and finch-like birds. Only between 20 and 30 insectivorous species are treated of, but of the small seed-eaters a very much larger number are described. It will doubtless be read with interest by those who have not already perused it in the *Feathered World*, and it will be handy to beginners as a book of reference.

We should have expected to find the important subject of food more fully discussed in a work of this kind. With regard to the feeding of soft-food birds, Dr. Butler's views are well known, and are, of course, re-stated in "Foreign Bird Keeping." Dr. Butler's method of treatment does not commend itself to the present writer.

It appears to us that in several instances Dr. Butler generalises too much, and draws conclusions as to the character of a species from too limited experience—but this is the fault of all writers on aviculture, and one which it is almost impossible to avoid.

There are numerous illustrations, some by the author and some by Mr. Lydon.

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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### THE SPOTTED PANTHER-BIRD.

SIR,—I wonder if any of our members know whether the Spotted Pardalote (*Pardalotus punctatus*) (Gould) or its congener, the Allied Pardalote (*P. affinis*), have been imported and kept in confinement in this country. It seems to me that they might be kept quite as easily as many other birds which are now regularly offered for sale, and more beautiful creatures it would be difficult to imagine.

In case the birds are not generally known, I enclose a drawing of the Spotted Pardalote made from specimens collected by myself in Australia. They are fairly common in the North of Victoria, and South-West of New South Wales. I do not know much of their habits, but imagine their food consists of various seeds and small insects. As far as I know, the sexes are alike, as all the specimens I obtained resemble one another.

The Allied Pardalote is a little larger than the Spotted variety (the drawing is life-size) and has the markings more in the form of streaks than spots. The mark over the eye runs completely over the base of the upper mandible, and is cadmium-yellow in front and white behind. The beak is greyish olive without markings, and the upper tail-coverts warm olive-brown

instead of crimson. The wings have, in place of spots, the feathers margined with white, and the bastard wing is decorated with brilliant scarlet. The under parts are greyer than in its Spotted relative, but in other respects its colouring and markings are not dissimilar.

I have only seen these birds mentioned in Gould's "Birds of Australia," but that may merely be ignorance on my part. It seems a pity, however, that they are not better known, and I, for one, should be delighted to obtain some living specimens.

NORMAN B. ROBERTS.

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*The following answer has been sent to Mr. Roberts :—*

The Spotted Pardalote was imported by Mr. J. Abrahams in 1882, and he forwarded a pair to Dr. Russ; but unfortunately they arrived dead. The allied Panther-bird has, I believe, never been imported. Our Zoological Society has never owned examples of any species of *Pardalotus*.

There is no reason why these pretty little birds should not be kept quite as easily as Tits, which they resemble in their actions, habits and food. They build domed nests in holes, either in trees or in the earth; lay white eggs, and feed upon seeds, buds, and insects.

What do you wish done with your charming coloured drawing? It is quite fit for publication.

A. G. BUTLER.

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#### NOTES ON VARIOUS SPECIES.

SIR,—Dr. Butler is undoubtedly correct in stating that the cock Nonpareil does not change colour in winter, at all events not invariably. For five years I have kept one in an open aviary, and, beyond so much of a duller tone as may be caused by the natural wear of the feathers at the end of the season, he undergoes absolutely no change of colour. I may say, however, that so experienced an aviculturist as Mr. Abrahams differs from me on this point: he has observed that birds under his care lose the bright blue on the head, while the red breast assumes a yellow tinge in the winter. Possibly individuals may vary in this particular.

In May, 1896, I purchased two hen Nonpareils, which I selected out of a cageful of two or three dozen; these I placed with my cock bird and have twice had nests and eggs, but without further result. The Nonpareil is decidedly a shy and timid bird, probably requiring ample space or freedom from the disturbing influence of other birds, to breed successfully. I fancy too much is made of the insectivorous habits of this species. At one time I supplied them rather freely with caterpillars and mealworms, but I have ceased doing so for some years with no ill results: in fact they are, if anything, more disposed to nest now than before. Of course, in an open air aviary birds are able to obtain a fair proportion of insects for themselves.

The DHVAL.—"Quarrelsome" is almost too mild an epithet to apply to this otherwise charming species. My bird possesses an absolutely demoniacal temper. His aviary companions are rather too large to be trifled with, and he therefore considers it safer to vent his spleen on his less formidable owner. The moment I open the door of his aviary, he descends on me with the utmost fury, usually attacking my hands with all the force he can put into his beak, and frequently succeeding in drawing blood; at times he alights on my shoulders, digging his beak into my neck, or, if in an unusually good humour, merely attempting to pull out my hair. At one

time, I had a Shâmah who also was of opinion that I was meant to be eaten, but he was mildness itself compared with the Dhyaal.

For the past two seasons a cock Red-headed Bunting (*Emberiza luteola*) and a hen Saffron Finch, in one of my outdoor aviaries, have paired, built a nest in a box and laid eggs; these, I suppose, could hardly be expected to prove fertile, at all events, they have never hatched.

I have noticed, lately, a number of the Japanese Bunting (*E. rutila*) at a bird shop; it seems to be seldom imported. I had for some years a pair given me by the late Mr. Allon, which he received, I think, from Germany. They are handsome birds: the cock bright chestnut above and yellow beneath, with a brown patch on the throat; the hen is generally pale and without the throat patch. Their disposition is rather timid, but they are very hardy. The cock has a bright little song, which is, however, not very noticeable.

I do not remember to have noticed any remarks on the North American White-throated Song Sparrow (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) in the pages of the Magazine, and conclude that it is a rare bird in captivity. A pair has been in my collection since November, 1897. During the first winter they resided in an indoor aviary; in the following spring they were removed to outdoor quarters, where they have since remained. In disposition this species is shy and retiring, the hen especially so, taking the shortest possible flights and quickly taking refuge under cover when observed. Through the spring and summer months, the exceedingly high-pitched and reiterated notes of the cock are almost incessant during the day and even frequent at night; the hen also sings at times, but her short and scrappy song is more of a Bunting character, though loud and harsh. I have never noticed these birds to be at all pugnacious, as might perhaps have been expected.

The *Diuca* is another bird that sings freely at night, especially when the moon is shining brightly. W. H. Hudson, in "Idle Days in Patagonia," writes very enthusiastically of the song of this bird, and it is certainly bright and cheerful; but, as rendered in captivity, I think this is about as much as can be said for it; in the silence of night, however, it can be heard distinctly at a considerable distance. This species does not seem to be as hardy as one would expect—a pair I attempted to winter in the open, succumbed to the inclemency of the season. In a moderately heated aviary it gives no trouble, and, if afforded plenty of space, would probably breed freely. My birds once nested, but the eggs were thrown out and broken when on the point of hatching.

The moulting of the Avadavat has always been rather a puzzle to me. My birds are kept indoors. I have, unfortunately, never taken any notes on the subject, and cannot, therefore, speak precisely, but roughly I should say Mr. Page's dates are about usual. The puzzling part, however, is that, besides the more or less regular yearly moult, there are various and frequent subsidiary changes of colour. I shall endeavour, in future, to make more accurate observations on this interesting subject.

Whilst referring to colour changes, I should like to record an observation on the assumption of colour in the genus *Pyromelana*. This spring I had occasion to catch an Orange Bishop, at the time when the change was commencing. While handling the bird, I noticed that the red feathers on the head were a palpably fresh growth and not, as is generally believed, merely a change in the colour of the old feathers.



I have had as little success in breeding this year as Mr. Savage. Some half-dozen Zebra Finches are all I can boast of, though I have had plenty of other nests but not a single hatch. Green Cardinals have three times built and laid eggs; in previous years they have regularly hatched out and then killed and cast out their young; this year they have more humanely cast forth the eggs instead.

R. A. TODD.

### BREEDING RESULTS.

SIR,—In the hope that other members may be induced to give their experiences of the breeding season just closing, I give a few notes of what has occurred here.

A pair of Parrot-finches reared a brood of four fine young, the nestlings leaving the nest-box the first week in July. The red feathers are now being gradually assumed. A pair of Black-headed Gouldian Finches, bred by a friend last Autumn, are now sitting in a box suspended in the outer portion of their aviary. My Long-tailed Grassfinches nested, but the eggs proved unfertile, or the young perished at an early stage. The pair are now going to nest again.

Several nests have been made during the Summer by the Cordon-bleus, of which I have had three pairs in perfect condition for two years; but, for various reasons, there were no results till last week, when, from a nest cleverly fitted into an angle of the roof under a gutter, a brood flew. Unluckily, the youngsters were not expected so soon, and no precautions were taken for their safety; with the result that one of my Rollers was seen the first thing one morning with a young Cordon-bleu in his bill, beating its life out against a perch. Of course, the Rollers were at once shut off, and now there is one remaining Cordon-bleu flying about and doing well. The dead nestling showed a blue wart in the angle of the mouth each side, and on the palate three dark spots, reminding me of the mouth-decoration of the Gouldian Finches described in the Magazine last Autumn by Dr. Butler.

I was anxious to give every chance to the Rollers, which at one time appeared likely to breed; and no doubt the small birds confined with them, though quite accustomed to the larger birds as a rule, were disturbed by the Rollers' restlessness at times, and I know several nests were forsaken from this cause. Of this pair of Rollers, the male was very anxious to nest, and was continually going in and out of a hollow log. He is very tame and impudent, and, in the Spring, when I went into his aviary, he would fly on to my head; and if I put up my hand to push him off, he would retaliate with digs of his powerful bill. The hen bird was timid, and as she declined the dainties offered by her mate, he used to come to me, and try to push the mealworm, or black-beetle, under my collar, or into the folds of my cap. Finding his mate indifferent, he became aggressive, and for some weeks she was rather seriously persecuted. Since the Summer moult commenced, I am glad to say that he has become more gentle towards her, and I may have more success another Spring, for the hen is much less shy than she was.

To the Rollers, at any rate to the very tame one referred to, I must attribute the loss of the first brood of Chinese Painted Quail. The Rollers had, up to the time of the hatching of the Quail, shown no signs of hostility towards the smallest of their companions; but the sight of the

poor little chicks was too much for the Rollers, and several were seen to be swallowed, only two being rescued, and subsequently reared.

My Diamond Doves have just reared a young one, the newly-hatched young of a previous nest having been destroyed by some Rock Thrushes. A pair of Scops Owls nested in a log; but they were not at that time in the excellent condition of those described in the last number by Mr. Meade-Waldo, and the eggs came to nothing.

My Pin-tailed Sand-Grouse laid several clutches of their beautiful eggs, and in one case three were hatched; but they were very weak from the first, and after a few days died. The Black-bellied Sand-Grouse also laid several clutches, but declined to sit. Of larger birds, we have a young Snowy Owl, and four young Eider Ducks, two of them now full-grown.

W. H. ST. QUINTIN.

### THE ORANGE-WINGED AMAZON.

I once possessed, for a few weeks or months, an example of this species (*Chrysotis amazonica*). The bird had been in the possession of acquaintances of mine for about three years, and was given to me by them. It never said anything beyond "Polly," which was uttered fairly distinctly; was by no means tame; and seemed lacking in intelligence. While in the cage in which it had lived at its old home, it had the habit of turning a somersault under its perch, and uttering at the same time an ear-piercing imitation of the sound of a rusty pump—when transferred to a different cage it abandoned this habit, but returned to it on going back to the old cage.

In appearance this species is much like the Blue-fronted—so much so that an inexperienced person might confuse them. It is, I think, larger than the Blue-fronted, and of a gaunter and much less pleasing appearance. The expression of the bird being somewhat forbidding, while the Blue-fronted is amiable-looking.

I soon got rid of my specimen, as I did not take to it.

HORATIO R. FILMER.

### THE AGE OF CAGE-BIRDS.

SIR,—My experience is that birds live comfortably and happily for many years in cages, if properly treated.

My niece has a Lizard Canary, a cock, which her brother brought to her in December, 1889. It was given to him by a friend who had had it for two years, so it must be nearly twelve years old. Here it lives in a cage 36 inches long, 26 inches high, and 19 inches wide. It always has plenty of river sand on the floor of its cage, and every variety of food that is good for it. It is very cheerful, and sang merrily all the spring.

In the same cage are two other birds—a Red Cardinal and an American Sparrow, hens—both of which have been here since November, 1892, which makes them just seven years old.

EDITH HARRISON.

THE  
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OCTOBER, 1899.

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THE CHINESE BULBUL.

*Pycnonotus sinensis.*

By A. G. BUTLER, Ph.D.

This is rather a pretty bird, mostly ashy and olive-yellowish above; brownish, yellow and white below; the head and neck may be roughly described as black and brown with conspicuous white patches on crown, sides of head and throat; the wing and tail feathers dark brown edged with yellow.

I have been unable to come across any notes on the nesting habits of this Bulbul, yet it must be a tolerably widely distributed and common species: there has been a fair number in the market this year, and I secured a healthy example on June 8th which I still possess: I feed it upon my soft mixture, orange, banana, and mealworms.

Dr. Russ seems to have been unacquainted with this bird when he published his Handbook in 1887, but it is included in volume II. of his larger work "Die fremdländischen Weichfutterfresser," published during the present year: he quotes the following short note on its habits from Père David. "The bird is abundantly distributed over the whole south of China up to the neighbourhood of the river Nantsekiang. It is evidently a very gentle and tame bird, which one sees throughout the year in the gardens at Shanghai, but never in the woods or in the mountains. It confines itself continually to cultivated country where berries and insects are never lacking to it. Sitting upon the top of a bamboo or tree it gives voice to a deep, tolerably pleasant sounding, but little varied song."

Dr. Russ speaks of having received this species haphazard: he says that "when chasing its mate, it hops round her either on branches or the ground with highly erected crest and nape feathers, drooping wings and fan-like tail, it indeed appears to be white-headed; but then it puffs out its entire plumage, so that it seems considerably larger than it actually is. Now it gets

out of the way of no other bird, even though it be the largest and most powerful inhabitant of the bird-room, moreover I have noticed that even the much larger Cassiques or Starling-like birds and Military-Starlings avoid quarrelling with it. Indeed they by no means attacked it, but invariably got out of its way. All other birds, equally large or small it drove from its vicinity or chased them away. It was only malicious to its red-cheeked relatives."

Dr. Russ' pair went to nest in 1893, but the first nest was destroyed through the interference of a Porto Rico Pigeon (*Columba squamosa*); indeed he says he lost two broods from this cause. Eventually the hen Pigeon died and he took the cock out, so now he says he hopes to have satisfactory results.

It appears that Mr. Langheinze owned a remarkably tame specimen of this Bulbul, which would alight on the food-basin whilst still in his hand and would not even leave the banquet when he touched it with his finger and strove to push it away. "Whoever then can give the time to it will soon be able to make this Bulbul finger-tame."

My own experience of the Chinese Bulbul is—that it is the most nervous and least confiding species that I have hitherto owned; which clearly proves that it is quite impossible to decide as to the temperament of a species from the study of one individual: however, since my example was purchased it has become a little quieter, and does not *invariably* rattle all over the cage when I give it fresh food.

The song is short, rapid, but rather brilliant, with a distinct sound of high piano-notes in it; the length and character of it may perhaps be expressed by the following—*Tiddle terut, tiddle tiddle terut*, uttered as quickly as possible: it seldom varies much.

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## THE BLUE-FRONTED AMAZON.

By REGINALD PHILLIPPS.

The best talking Parrot that I ever myself came across was a Blue-fronted Amazon, in one of Mr. J. Abrahams' private rooms. All its natural notes had been obliterated, or at any rate suppressed; and the bird kept up a constant flow of plainly-spoken sentences and well-sung songs. At a meeting of the old Cage Bird Club, I referred to this Parrot; and another member present stated that the best talker he had ever met with likewise was a Blue-fronted Amazon.



My own experience with this species is that, when young, it learns quickly, but that it forgets a great deal after a time, and that, as it grows older, its powers of learning seem to fail.

For many years a male of this species, belonging to my son, was in my charge. He learned a few things well and more imperfectly. His laughter was always a pleasure to listen to; and his "Shake a paw," as he raised his right foot and clasped one's extended finger, was, and still is, perfect. He picked up from me "You old Fool" practically straight away, and for some time revelled in the sentence, playing on the word "Fool" with great emphasis and satisfaction. On one occasion, he was on a long perch in the garden aviary when I brought in a lady to see the birds. With bristling feathers, excitedly hurrying backwards and forwards, he instantly struck up "You old Fool; FOOL; FOOL; YOU OLD FOOL," never stopping for a moment until the lady, greatly offended, and regarding it as a personal affront, abruptly withdrew into the house.

At one time, in my dining-room, where Polly was kept, I had a Blue-cheeked Barbet. Anyone who has kept the male of this species will be acquainted with its curious water-bubbling note. Polly quickly picked it up, and, although this was many years ago, still uses it as one of his favourite calls. Having learned it, he came to regard it as his own; and when the Barbet uttered his own call Polly would go mad with rage, thinking he was being mocked, and almost frantic in his endeavours to get at him.

Polly could be terribly cruel. One day I carried him into the garden, when he espied in a dark corner, well out of my reach, a Scops Owl. I had forgotten, for the moment, that the male was not in hiding as usual, but was keeping guard just outside the nest on which the female was sitting. I heard Polly utter a horrible chuckle, the import of which I knew well, and at once realized the danger. I uttered a howl which might have awakened the dead,—which Polly disregarded—and made a rush for a long-handled net; but it was too late. Polly gave but one crunch; and the poor little hero fell with a sickening thud, a bloody shapeless mass; the Parrot's long upper mandible had entered the back, smashed up one of the shoulders into splints, and laid open the vitals. This was one of a few occasions which I have experienced in bird-keeping when I had to bottle up my wrath very tightly—for I could have torn Polly limb from limb in my hot anger. Marvellous to relate, the Scops recovered, fully recovered his health, but of course was never able to fly again.

When in the garden, Polly did not by any means always have his own way. He was universally detested ; and some of the Jays and Pies played him many a pretty trick. The male Struthidea, too, had a pleasing little way of suddenly pouncing down upon him, and knocking him headlong from his perch.

But the Hunting Cissa was his pet aversion. The male Cissa is a terrible scamp, and as cunning a rogue as may be found in Asia. Polly is brought into the garden, and placed on a long perch, and along the perch he trots ; but he suddenly stops and looks nervously round, and finds that the Cissa has suddenly appeared on the same perch behind him ;—but he is looking the other way, and seems *so* innocent, that Polly trots on again. He quickly stops, however, and looks anxiously back ; but the Cissa, although certainly much nearer, is only industriously wiping his bill. Again Polly trots off, but suddenly stops short, for the Cissa, who is still wiping his bill, is now close behind him. Polly is in a quandary ; if he turns once more, he knows what is in store for him ; for the Cissa *never* lost an opportunity of pulling Polly's tail, and this he would do with no gentle tweak, but with a tug so vicious that Polly would yelp like a toe-trodden puppy. So nervous did Polly become that, eventually, when put out, he would at once fly into a sheltered corner where he could not be attacked from behind, and there he would stay until taken in again.

What with Polly's jealousy of, and madness towards, some of the other birds, and his horrible and continuous screaming when not being petted, he was voted a nuisance, and, after some years, was handed over to a niece, who pays him unremitting attention. Mr. Dutton refers to the uncertainty of the temper of the Amazons. There is no such uncertainty about Polly. His present owner hardly dares to let Polly out of his cage because of the difficulty she experiences in getting him back again, for Polly will be pretty certain to bite her if thwarted. But to-day, as in the past, Polly obeys my orders in a moment, because he knows I am master. With the larger Parrots, Cockatoos, Horses, and Sunday Scholars, if you are not master you are nowhere. Teach them first and foremost to respect you, and then you may shew kindness, but to begin with and to trust to kindness, and kindness alone, is fatal. Of course these remarks do not apply to timid birds, only to the savage and strong, and to those who have sufficient reasoning powers to know right from wrong.

Occasionally I pay Polly a visit ; and the moment my

voice is heard wild cries resound through the house, for I still stand first in his affections. And when I open the cage-door and he comes on to my hand,—with every feather on end, with wings extended and tail outspread, quivering with excitement, and talking and laughing away to his utmost capacity—it is difficult to imagine a more attractive creature; and I wonder to myself how I ever could have had the heart to part with Polly.

Polly often “nested,” and would certainly have bred with me if he had had a mate.

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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### DISTINCTION OF THE SEXES IN PENNANT PARRAKEETS.

[We have received a letter from Mr. Farrar in which he states (1) that he has no Adelaide Parrakeets, either cocks or hens (2) that he knows the difference between Adelaides and Pennants perfectly well (3) that all his birds are common Pennants (*Platycercus elegans*). Unfortunately his letter is worded in a needlessly aggressive way—and we therefore consider it better not to insert it.]

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SIR,—I saw Mr. Farrar's Pennants not a fortnight ago, and I most emphatically say that, in my opinion, there is no doubt whatever about their being ordinary Pennants.

Does Dr. Butler imagine that Mr. Farrar does not know a Pennant from an Adelaide? The hen Pennant is quite easily distinguished from the cock by the dull brick-red of her colour; her small rounded head, and, as Mr. Farrar says, *absolutely* certainly by her tail, the middle of which is green, whereas, in the cock it is deep blue.

I saw Mr. Farrar's first hen Pennant, and though she was *more orangey-red* in colour, she had the same shaped head and the same tail colouring.

I have a hen Pennant, at present, identical with Mr. Farrar's No. 2 hen, and I know another member of the Society who has one also.

Young Pennants, moreover, are not “all green,” as Dr. Butler asserts; nor “all brown,” as Mr. Gedney affirms; but marked precisely as Mr. Farrar says in his recent article.

G. LE C. GRACE.

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SIR,—As you invite notes on this subject, I should like to say a few words on the matter.

In the first place, I may say that during the last six or seven years I have had a dozen or more of these birds. I have three at present, one cock and two hens—the cock is identical with Mr. Farrar's description of his

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(v) The dispute is about the *female* in Mr. Farrar's possession—we believe the male is admitted by all to be an ordinary Pennant Parrakeet. Will Mr. Oates tell us whether his own hens shew the same difference from the cock (in plumage) as Mr. Farrar's does?—ED.

male bird (*v*), and I doubt very much whether Dr. Butler or any other person ever saw an *adult full-plumaged cock* with centre tail-feathers green.

In addition to blue tail, you must look for a bold masculine head, brilliant colour, and size.

On August 29th I had the pleasure of seeing the birds in question, both young and old, and I consider them typical birds of *P. elegans*.

Would Dr. Butler say whether the bird he calls Adelaide Broadtail is identical with the Yellow-rumped Parrakeet illustrated and described by Dr. Greene, in vol. II. p. 8 of "Parrots in Captivity"? (*b*)

F. W. OATES.

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SIR,—If I may venture to comment upon Mr. Farrar's letter, published in the September number, about the colouring of the female Pennant, I would say that I believe I possessed a true pair of these birds, which I kept in my outdoor aviaries for a year (I still have the male bird), and the only difference I could discern between the male and the female was that the latter had a smaller head, with an altogether feminine appearance, when side by side with her mate. To a practised eye the difference was decided. The colouring was the same, except that in the female it was less brilliant.

I regret that she died, as also did a hen Crimson-wing about the same time, whilst her mate (as in the case of the Pennant) still survives. This is only too often the case.

I believe the foot-note of A. G. B. is, probably, quite correct, with regard to Mr. Farrar's remarks. Do not all young Australian Parrakeets resemble, for the most part, the adult female when they leave the nest? It is not likely, if the Pennants bred in Mr. Farrar's aviary were pure, that some would have green tail centres, and some blue. This fact seems to me to show that the male and female are of different species, and that two have taken after the mother, and three after the father (*Platycercus adelaidæ* and *P. elegans* respectively). Naturally, one would not like to state this as an absolute surety, for, whatever one's experience, one can always be open to correction.

May I be allowed, in all courtesy, to say that it seems a pity that letters should be couched in a style which do not exactly assist an Editor in the somewhat difficult task of correcting or offering his help in pointing out mistakes on the part of the writers? Neither do I think that Mr. Fillmer's original comment upon Mr. Farrar's original letter about Pennants was in the least 'impolite.' Mr. Fillmer's duty was to state what he believed to be a wrong impression, and in that statement he took care to say that his remarks were not aimed at Mr. Farrar personally, but would apply to all articles published in the Magazine.

Readers of it would not weary of Mr. Farrar's articles on birds (as such they are most interesting), but would they not soon grow weary of a

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(*b*) Certainly not; but that is probably the bird which Mr. Farrar takes for the Adelaide Broadtail. The latter corresponds in every respect with Mr. Farrar's description of his supposed female Pennants and is the only species which (in both sexes) answers to his description of the hen. If Mr. Oates has birds so-coloured, and believes them to be hen Pennants, I am afraid he will have to alter his opinion; it is not probable that there are two forms of female Pennants, one almost identical in every respect with the male, and the other indistinguishable from the hen of the Adelaide Broadtail.—A. G. B.



tone of defiance towards the Editor, or towards anyone who ventures to disagree with the writer?

I hope that Mr. Farrar will not take umbrage at what I have, I trust in courteous language, tried to say; for I feel, and probably many others with me, that courtesy and not too much prominence given to 'thinks I,' are two of the most advisable means for carrying on any correspondence in a proper spirit.

In any case, whether the young Parrakeets bred by Mr. Farrar are pure Pennants or not, it is a very interesting experience, and one decidedly not to be kept in the background.

HUBERT D. ASTLEY.

SIR,—Seeing in the letter of the Rev. C. D. Farrar that he is the first to rear Pennant Parrakeets—I have bred about *twenty* in the last six years (*c*), and have had hens breed freely that are bred in my outdoor unheated garden-aviary; but all my birds, when in adult plumage, are identical. The males are larger, have much flatter heads, and are more aggressive in the Spring. I have had as many as six in one nest. I find they so often die after they have left the nest about ten days. I have only one pair now. The seed, etc., should be put where it is no trouble for them to find it.

This season I have bred three King Parrakeets, eight Peach-faced Lovebirds, three Red-headed Rosellas, and several Budgerigars. My Red-mantled Parrakeets had two young ones: they died when about two weeks old.

EDWD. LE HEUP COCKSEGE.

SIR,—I do not think that Mr. Farrar is right about Pennants. One of mine has just died, and *post mortem* examination proved it to be a hen—there was not a single green feather in her tail, and the only differences from the male, that I could see, were that the head was smaller and the plumage not quite so bright.

(Mrs.) M. B. LANCASTER.

I have carefully examined the series of skins of the Pennant Parrakeet (commonly called *Platycercus pennanti*, but *P. elegans* in the Cat. Birds Brit. Mus.) and of the Adelaide Parrakeet (*P. adelaidæ*) at the British Museum, in the company of Dr. Butler.

There are several skins of the first named which are marked as being those of females, and these are distinguished from the rest by their smaller size and slightly duller colour—but not, so far as I could see, by any such differences of tint as are stated by Mr. Farrar to exist in the case of his Parrakeets.

If it be admitted that Mr. Farrar's female is a true example of *P. elegans*, he is still as far off as ever from proving that all females of the species differ from the male in the same way as his does. Mr. Farrar's female Parrakeet may be a Pennant, or it may be an Adelaide, or it may be neither—I am not concerned to prove what it is. All I say about it is simply this,—that if the hen in question differs from the male Pennant in

(c) And see also a case of breeding *Platycercus elegans* mentioned in the U. K. Foreign Cage-Bird Soc. Report for January, 1893.—ED.

the manner and to the extent stated by Mr. Farrar, it is not a typical adult specimen of *P. elegans*, and Mr. Farrar has not proved that such differences are true sexual characteristics.

*P. adelaidæ* agrees remarkably in many respects with Mr. Farrar's description of the female. It differs from *P. elegans* in having the crimson replaced by orange-red; the violet on the chin is much paler; the feathers on the back have traces of a colour which Mr. Farrar describes as that of the *Strand Magazine*; the tail has a more decided greenish tint; the legs are greyer. It therefore seems to me very probable that Dr. Butler's solution of the difficulty may be the true one—but I do not pledge myself to that or any other theory.

It is somewhat curious that in Mr. Farrar's article on "The Sex of Pennants" he describes the centre tail feathers of the cock as "black" (vol. iv. p. 108), while in his article on "The Nesting of the Pennant" he calls them "rich violet" (page 176 of this vol.), and Mr. Grace and Mr. Oates, in their letters printed above, describe the colour as "blue."

HORATIO R. FILLMER.

#### NOTES AND QUERIES.

SIR,—I hope you will excuse the casual nature of the present "Notes and Queries," suggested by recent communications to our Magazine.

*Shâmas, etc.* I was much interested in Miss Alderson's account of her birds; her experience of this species tallies remarkably with mine in at least two points. A male bird I kept some time by himself used to bask on the floor with outspread wings, in just the way she describes, and like no other bird I know. Also, when first put in a cage together with a hen, he attacked and persecuted her furiously. Afterwards, when both were placed in a much larger cage together, she turned the tables on him, and led him such a life that I had to remove her altogether. I infer from this that, with Shâmas, a long and formal introduction is necessary if a pair are to agree, and I think Miss Alderson is doing very right in keeping hers apart. The Shâma, like other members of the Thrush family, seems naturally unsociable even with the other sex of its own species, but even sociable species may at times refuse to chum up at first. Some time ago, when joint Secretary to the Zoo here, I introduced a hen *Liothrix* into a cage where a bachelor male had long remained. He immediately made violent love to her, showing off with his wings slightly expanded and inclined sideways, like some Pheasants, and breast rather puffed out—but she would have nothing to do with him, either then or a long time after, though they are as friendly as possible now, like their charming species as a rule. Does *Liothrix*, by the way, always show off in this way? This is the only occasion on which I have ever seen it done, and I have kept several of both sexes myself. Also, does the Hedge-Sparrow (*Accentor modularis*) which is sometimes considered very nearly akin to *Liothrix*, ever cuddle up to and caress its companions, and employ its foot for holding its food? These habits are most characteristic of *Liothrix*, and of the Babbler family, to which it undoubtedly belongs, generally.

*Food for Waterfowl.* Miss Alderson should take care that her pond contains plenty of water-snails, small enough for her birds to swallow. I have observed many species of Ducks, and find that these molluscs are a favourite food with them, especially with the diving kinds; two Flam-

ingoes, even, that I kept, used to eat them, judging from their swallowing movements.

*Mimicry by Birds in a Wild State.* My experience in India corroborates Mr. C. Harrison's, in that I have never heard a wild Parrakeet imitate another bird. In England, however, I have heard a Starling give the Peewit's call, and I fancy our common Mynahs (*Acridotheres tristis*) here are natural mockers.

*Emerald Bird of Paradise.* Mr. H. J. Fulljames, with whose disappointment, after his very plucky purchase, I most heartily sympathise, may be interested to know that for some years we have had males of both the Large and Small Emerald Birds at the Calcutta Zoo.

F. FINN.

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### BLUE ROBINS.

SIR,—I fear Miss West's experience in breeding Blue Robins is that of many others: failure in rearing the young is very frequent. Some aviculturists have been more fortunate than others, probably where the birds have been kept in large outdoor aviaries and were able to find there part of the natural food they require to feed their young upon. Under other circumstances, non-success in rearing the young is often the result.

Probably few soft-billed birds nest more readily in confinement than Blue Robins, that is, build nests, lay eggs and hatch them: but rearing the young is another thing. A young hen Blue Robin was once reared in my aviary, and she had young the following year, but they all died at a very tender age. I saw my birds treat their young exactly as Miss West's did, and carry them, dead or dying, about the aviary—the fuss and noise they made in doing so attracted my attention. I mentioned this in the Magazine in July, 1895, and sent, a little later, a few notes on breeding these birds.

The greater part of my time from the middle of September until towards June, is spent in travelling on the Continent, and during that time my birds are looked after by others, servants chiefly; so I have given up keeping soft-food birds, for I find, during my absences, they don't get the care and attention they should have, and most servants object to touching the "horrid mess" the birds require for food. They (the servants) probably do their best, but it is a very poor "best" sometimes—it is better therefore to leave soft-billed birds alone, than keep them and not have them properly looked after, as would be the case with me.

A. SAVAGE.

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### SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE BREEDING (AND ATTEMPTED BREEDING) OF FOREIGN BIRDS.

SIR,—According to most avicultural books, Parrakeet-breeding is not at all a difficult matter, providing only you have a good-sized aviary fitted up with logs, nests, etc. I must say my experience does not quite bear this out, and I am acquainted with other Yorkshire aviarists whose experience is the same.

I have always had a love for birds, and when quite a little chap in petticoats, nothing gave me greater pleasure than to get hold of a young one, which I generally managed to rear.

Up to a few years ago I devoted most of my attention to Britishers, mostly insectivorous, since which I have gradually drifted to the foreign

species ; but to hark back to the Parrakeets. The great difficulty with most species is to get a true pair, and then, if newly-imported, to get them acclimatised. It is generally useless to expect them to breed the first season, indeed, it is better not to encourage them to do so, and there is less danger from egg-binding if not allowed to nest until their second season.

Some three or four years ago, I had an ambition to breed Mealy Rosellas. I procured a couple from our esteemed member Mr. Housden ; in his opinion they were a true pair, they were young birds and had their heads splashed with red. I eventually (after twelve months keep) proved them to be both cocks. Advertising one in the Magazine, I sold it to a gentleman in Surrey. An advertisement for a hen failed to have the desired effect, and it was not until the August following, 1898, that I procured one—a newly-imported bird, in poor condition and very weakly. With a lot of careful nursing and attention I brought her round, and she has rewarded me this Spring by going to nest and successfully rearing two fine young ones. I am in hopes they will even do better next season.

I also might add that in an adjoining box a pair of Cockatiels have brought off a nest of five—this speaks well for the disposition and amiability of both pairs.

The other inhabitants of this portion of the aviary are Red-rumps, Blossom-heads, Blue-wings and Madagascar Love-birds. It may be of interest to note that, in another division of the aviary, I have a brace of Chinese Quails, a week old at the time of writing. Last year they got as far as perfectly-formed young in eggs, but failed to hatch.

F. W. OATES.

#### THE NESTING OF THE CRIMSONWING.

SIR,—I quite hoped to send, next month, to the Magazine, an account of the successful rearing of the Crimsonwing ; but, alas, I have been disappointed on the very verge of success. I had three beautiful youngsters hatched from three eggs ; fed most carefully by their parents, and feathering well, and nearly a month old ; when, lo, there came two bitter cold nights after the tropical week in July, and they took a chill and died. I could have wept tears of vexation and disappointment over their untimely death. So near to success and then to have to wait another year !

Mr. F. W. Oates, one of our members and a great friend of mine, has to-day seen the bodies, and he will certify in a note what grand birds they were.

I have no heart to write any more ; but if we live another year, I hope to succeed.

C. D. FARRAR.

#### THE AGE OF CAGE-BIRDS.

SIR,—Regarding the age of cage-birds, my aunt had a Cardinal bought in Malta in 1881, age unknown, which died last August (1898) thus reaching the age of 17½ years, which, I think, must be unusual in a bird of that size.

(Mrs.) R. SHERBROOKE.



## HYBRIDS.

Mr. FRANK F. LAMBERT, of Beverley, has this summer bred three hybrids between the Spice Bird or Nutmeg Finch and the Bengalese.

HORATIO R. FILLMER.

## TORTOISES.

SIR,—Since we have opened our columns to the reptilian allies of our feathered friends, I thought I might as well send the following extract, by way of showing that the lady Mr. Phillipps tells us of, in the July number, was not so far out after all (*d*). I may also mention that in 1892 I brought an African Water-Tortoise (*Pelomedusa gabata*) home without food, from Mombasa to London.

*From the Proceedings, Asiatic Society of Bengal, for June, 1899.*

“Mr. F. Finn exhibited a living Soft-shelled Tortoise (*Emyda* sp. ?) and read the following remarks by W. K. Dods, Esq. :—

“‘I got the Turtle (exhibited) on the evening of the 1st April when out after Eld’s Deer, on one of the grassy plains near the mouth of the Sittang River. Though dry and burnt up at the time of my visit, this ground is a swamp at least seven months in the year, after which, when the water, even in the Buffalo-wallows, begins to disappear, the Turtles and Water-snakes bury themselves in the mud, and lie off till the first Monsoon rains soften the soil and release them for another season. This particular individual was under about two inches of soil, so dry and heated by the sun as to be most disagreeable to walk on even with the protection to one’s feet afforded by a heavy pair of shooting boots. Originally the ground had been covered by a thick growth of grass, but that had all been burnt off about a month before by a jungle fire, exposing the cracked soil to the full rays of the sun, and the small round breathing-hole to the sharp eyes of my Burman guide. It was quite lively when dug out, and has never to my knowledge eaten anything since. It seems equally indifferent whether its residence is in a bag, a basket, an empty cartridge box, or a pail of water. I saw the shells of several others lying about, but whether they met their end by jungle fires or other causes I could not find out.’

“Mr. Finn also exhibited a head of the Clucking Teal (*Nettion formosum*) from a specimen shot in India recently, and made remarks upon it.”

F. FINN.

(*d*) If we are to admit reptiles (and they are certainly deserving of notice) would it not be well to try and amalgamate our Magazine with the *Zoologist* ? in which I see an avicultural corner has very properly been started at Dr. Butler’s suggestion.—F. F.

I am quite sure that our member Mr. R. Phillipps never intended to introduce Reptiles into the Magazine when he wrote his short paragraph on his friend’s Tortoise. I am also quite sure that there would not be room in the *Zoologist* for the *Avicultural Magazine*.—A. G. B.

The insertion of Mr. Phillipps’ and Mr. Finn’s communications must not be taken as an indication of an intention to throw the Magazine open to zoological subjects other than ornithological—though personally I am strongly in favour of such a course. Such a change of policy would require the approval of the Council. It would not, I think, be wise to go beyond the vertebrates.—H. R. F.

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